

Dragon Relations

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Summary: The fourth installment of the Dragon Trainer, Dragon Speaker series. After having reoccurring nightmares, Grim decides to consult the Scottish witch they met on a previous adventure. Hiccup goes with, but things quickly get out of hand and they must fight to save the dragons of a foreign land.

1. Chapter 1

****Welcome to the fourth installment of the Dragon Trainer, Dragon Speaker series. I'm amazed that at this series so far because I didn't think I would go as far as a Deltora crossover, at least with Grim and Deathshriek. Anyway, there will be old friends and new friends in this story, so take into account the previous three installments. And for all those serious fans of this series, you may, may, finally learn a certain prince's name. Other than that, I'm not telling you anything else in regards to that. You can guess and speculate all you want from there. For those of you who haven't read the Deltora series, I'm going to do my best for everything to make sense. Hiccup and Grim know nothing about Deltora either. For the Deltora part, I am only referencing the books. I only watched two episodes of the anime and was disappointed by it, but that's just me. I have given you a fairly long chapter to start, but don't expect chapters to be as long. I am still working on this story and updates won't be as frequent as they were in the series early days. So enjoy and leave a comment in the review section.****

* * *

><p>Hiccup was sitting at his desk working on a new sketch for his next project. He was going to make another tailfin that Toothless could operate on his own. He was trying to see if he could make the tailfin so Toothless could operate it by himself if he was separated from Hiccup and Hiccup could use the pedal when they flew together. He had seriously begun thinking about it after once again they were separated and they both nearly got killed.<p>

Hiccup glanced out the window. He was amazed that it had already been a month since the Outcasts had become allies of Berk and the Screaming Death was something they no longer had to worry about. Things were getting better for the island.

A moan made Hiccup turn to the second bed in the bedroom. His adoptive brother, Grim, was tossing and turning in his sleep again. His black hair was tangled and his pale face was scrunched up.

Toothless gave a warble from his perch on his slab. The dragons were often woken by Grim when he started having nightmares two weeks ago. Usually, Grim's dragon, Deathshriek, a Baleful Banshee and a cousin of a Night Fury if Fishlegs' research was anything to go on, would be able to sing the teen back to sleep.

"Not again," Hiccup said.

He put his quill down and walked over to Grim's bed. Hiccup was careful when he woke his brother. He grabbed one of his feet and gave it a shake.

Grim sat up and snarled.

"Whoa, it's just me," Hiccup said, taking a step back with his hands up. "You were dreaming again."

Grim sighed and pushed his black hair out of his eyes. "Did I wake you?"

How one could speak in rumbling growls and bloodcurdling shrieks and still had a rich, smooth voice like Grim had was beyond Hiccup. It was like an otherworldly quality, much like Grim's pure blue eyes.

"No, it's the midmorning," said Hiccup. "Do you remember anything this time?"

"No," replied Grim, irritated.

Each time Grim woke from one of his nightmares, he would forget it.

"Oh, well," said Hiccup. "What do you want to do today?"

Grim got out of bed, popping his back. He was taller than Hiccup and much stronger than anyone could guess. It came with living with dragons for two years. Grim was strong enough to wrestle any Viking into submission and a few dragons as well.

"Are you still working on the new tailfin for Toothless?" Grim asked.

"I'm almost done," said Hiccup. They both went over to the desk. "I'm using a similar design to the independent tailfin I made for Toothless last year. From there I'm trying to make a lever that will disengage and reengage the tailfin mechanism on his tail without getting jammed."

"I will go to the forge with you," said Grim. "I may finish my coat

today."

They both went down to the forge where Hiccup began working on the new tailfin. Grim pulled out a box full of black dragon scales and fired up the forge. One of Grim's many talents was being able to turn dragon scales into clothes. Many of his clothes were made out of these scales. It was also what he used to trade with Trader Johann for whatever he needed. Today he was finishing a project he had been working on for the last week; a long coat made of black dragon scales. Hiccup wasn't sure where Grim had gotten the black dragon scales because pure black scales were only on three dragons he knew of: Toothless, Deathshriek, and Fearcloak. The only part of the coat that needed finishing was the large hood that would hide Grim's face.

After an hour, Grim was in the back of the shop, putting the secret finishing touches on the coat. He brought it back out to let the special polish finish drying.

"**Grim!**" A small dragon jumped onto Grim's back. It was Fearcloak, a Creeping Shadow dragon in the Fear Class they met when they were in Scotland. His thin body was about three feet in length, his wingspan double that. Two long tails fell almost to the ground. He poked his narrow snout into Grim's shoulder, purring, and his two pairs of red eyes were half-lidded. His entire body was covered in black scales. He only had hind legs and walked on his wings, very similar to a Monstrous Nightmare. Fearcloak adored Grim and loved to hold onto his shoulders and be piggybacked around, looking like an old cloak, hence his name. "**You look sleepy.**"

"**I am sleepy,**" Grim said. "**I did not sleep well.**"

Fearcloak nudged his cheek. "**Shouldn't you try to sleep more? Dragons take naps all the time.**"

"**I cannot,**" said Grim. "**My nightmares keep me from sleeping.**"

Fearcloak cooed. "**What are your nightmares about?**"

Grim shook his head. "**I forget them when I wake up.**"

"**Don't humans remember dreams?**" asked Fearcloak.

"**Do dragons remember all of theirs?**" Grim asked.

Fearcloak sighed. "**I see your point.**" He settled on his shoulders to take a nap.

Grim smiled and scratched Fearcloak's head.

"All done?" Hiccup called.

Grim came over to Hiccup to see how far he had gotten. He had forged some gears that would work the tailfin and was in the process of twisting some rods to connect to the gears.

"Do you need me to help you?" Grim asked.

"No, I got it," said Hiccup. "Maybe you should go back to home and

try to get some sleep."

"No," replied Grim. "I am going to the Academy."

Grim decided to walk to the Academy to try to clear his head. He walked in to find Deathshriek sunning himself in the middle of the arena. The blue and black Baleful Banshee opened one pure blue eye.

"**I was enjoying my nap,**" he said.

"**Do not let me stop you,**" said Grim. "**If I did not know better, I would think you were trying to get me to sleep.**"

He heard a telltale whine from Fearcloak.

"**We are all worried about you, Grim,**" said Deathshriek. "**You haven't slept properly in two weeks.**"

Grim carefully dislodged Fearcloak from his back and placed him on some crates in the sunny area to bask. He went to Deathshriek's side. Deathshriek lifted one black wing to welcome Grim to lie down tucked against his side. Grim lay next to Deathshriek and was covered with his wing.

"**Go to sleep, Grim,**" Deathshriek said. "**If Snotlout and the twins come down here, I will see that they leave quickly.**"

Grim closed his eyes and went to sleep.

Deathshriek was dozing himself when a vicious kick hit him in the leg. "**Grim, stop kicking.**" He was promptly kicked again. Deathshriek lifted his wing and glared. "**Grim.**"

Grim moaned and turned over.

Deathshriek watched Grim continually kick him and turn over. He would hiss incoherently at times and Deathshriek couldn't figure out what Grim was dreaming about.

"**Shouldn't we wake him?**" Fearcloak asked.

"**I am not sure,**" said Deathshriek. "**If I wake him, he may forget what he is dreaming about.**"

"**But he's suffering!**" Fearcloak pointed out.

Deathshriek grunted. "**Grim, wake up. Grim, you're dreaming.**" Deathshriek turned his head and licked Grim across the face.

Grim started awake. "What?"

"**You were dreaming again,**" said Deathshriek.

Grim wiped his face.

"**Did you remember anything?**" asked Fearcloak.

"**No,**" replied Grim, standing. "**This is becoming ridiculous. Is this going to end?**"

Deathshriek didn't say anything at first. "***Let's go flying. That always seems to soothe you. We will fly out to Dragon Island and you can commune with the dragons there.**"

Grim nodded and swung himself on Deathshriek's back.

The two friends flew to Dragon Island.

The dragons on Dragon Island knew exactly who Grim and Deathshriek were after they helped save the island from the Screaming Death months before. Those dragons tended to leave Grim and Deathshriek alone.

They landed on the beach for Deathshriek have enough sun for a proper basking.

"**Feel a little better?**" Deathshriek asked hopefully.

Grim nodded and sat on a rock.

Deathshriek purred as he arranged himself on the beach to sun himself. He turned himself in such a way he could see Grim and any possible threats that would fly in to attack them.

"**Once you begin sleeping again, perhaps we should take a trip to Scotland,**" Deathshriek suggested. "***I am sure your princess is missing you, my prince.**"

Grim grunted, annoyed with the prince comment. Yes, by blood he was an Irish prince, but he had been banished by his family and clan because he had made friends with a dragon. Said dragon had been killed and Grim had been tossed in a boat and left for dead. Grim did not like having anything to do with nobility, but he had helped save the Scots from a Queen Dragon and had become friends with the princess. That same adventure also led to them being charmed by a witch. Grim could become invisible like Deathshriek and Hiccup had the ability to walk with silent footsteps when he wanted to.

"**She will be happy to see you,**" said Deathshriek. "***Her brothers, too. And Ember-Ash and Blackscar.**"

Grim grunted again, this time in agreement. "***But only after I begin sleeping again.**"

"Yahoo!"

Grim and Deathshriek jumped.

A purple Nightmare flew low over their heads and inland.

"**Oh, no,**" grumbled Deathshriek.

"Oh, Gustav," Grim sighed, getting up.

Grim was the only rider who knew Gustav never gave up Fanghook after Hiccup told him to. Grim really didn't care about that, but he was worried the boy would get hurt by doing something reckless. He didn't dare try to separate them like the other riders had because he saw the bond between Gustav and Fanghook.

Grim got on Deathshriek and the two flew invisibly to where Gustav and Fanghook landed.

"**Should we let them know we're here?**" asked Deathshriek.

"**Wait a moment,**" replied Grim.

Grim observed them for a few moments. Gustav appeared to be getting better at staying on Fanghook's neck without a saddle. He also didn't seem as clumsy as he used to.

Grim dropped his invisibility. "And what, pray tell, are you doing on Dragon Island, Gustav?"

Gustav yelped and nearly jumped out of his skin. "Grim! What are you doing here?"

"I believe I asked you first," said Grim. He looked up at Fanghook. "I thought we had agreed you would stay on Berk."

"Aw, I wanted to see Dragon Island for myself," said Gustav. "I hear Hiccup and the other riders talking about it all the time."

"Why didn't you just ask me to bring you with?" asked Grim. "You are not the most experienced rider by any means. Not all dragons are as easy to handle as your Fanghook. Some of them can be vicious."

Gustav hung his head. "I'm sorry. I didn't want to bother you. You've seemed too busy with other things."

"Gustav, you are my only pupil," said Grim. "Trader Johann isn't due back for a few weeks, we don't have to worry about Berserkers for a little while, and the Outcasts have become our allies."

"But why are they our allies?" Gustav asked. "They've attacked us in the past."

Grim smiled. "And there is your answer. In the past. It was the same with the dragons and look at us now. Who would have thought a human and a dragon could be friends."

Deathshriek stepped out and grunted.

Fanghook nuzzled Gustav's shoulder.

A booming roar sounded from the other side of the island.

Grim's smile broadened. "I was not expecting to see him today. Come, Gustav."

They took a quick flight across the island to where the sound originated from.

Gustav let out a cry of surprise when he saw the dragons making the noise. "Thornado!"

Hearing his name, the blue Thunder Drum lifted his eyes to the sky. No one on Berk had seen Thornado since he had taken three baby

Thunder Drums under his wing. The original idea had been for Thornado to look after of them until they found another Thunder Drum to take care of them. However, plans changed and Thornado decided to keep watch over them.

Grim! Thornado bellowed up to them. ***How are you?***

Deathshriek and Fanghook landed.

Gustav hopped down. "Cool! I didn't think I would be seeing Thornado up close."

The three baby Thunder Drums charged up to Gustav.

Gentle, Thornado ordered.

Bing, Bam, and Boom look well, Deathshriek said, observing the little ones. He turned back to Thornado. ***How is parenthood treating you, Thornado?***

The two dragons began talking about Thornado's adventures and his time with the baby Thunder Drums.

Bing, the green Thunder Drum, knocked Gustav over. Fanghook hissed at him.

It's all right, Grim assured them. "Gustav, what do you see?"

Gustav gave Grim a funny look. "I see three small Thunder Drums. They're still growing, right? One's green, one's blue, and one's purple. Do they have names?"

"Bing, Bam, and Boom," Grim replied. "What else?"

"I remember they wrecked Berk," Gustav added.

"They certainly did," said Grim. "Now, I do not know if you can see it, none of the others did until I pointed it out, but one of these Thunder Drums is different from the others."

Gustav looked at each Thunder Drum closely. "I'm not sure what I'm supposed to be looking for, Grim."

Grim smiled. "Bing and Bam are male. Boom is female."

"Oh," said Gustav. "How can you tell?"

"There are a few ways to tell," said Grim. "Every breed is a little different. Thunder Drums are one of the hardest to determine gender. It also helps if you speak Dragonese. I overheard Bing and Bam refer to Boom as female."

Gustav seems to have taken to Grim very well, said Thornado.

Yes, replied Deathshriek. ***Rather have him take after Grim than take after Snotlout.***

Thornado laughed. "***How is Grim?***"

Deathshriek sighed. "***Not as well as he could be. He hasn't been sleeping well. He has nightmares and wakes up not remembering what he was dreaming.***"

Thornado hummed. "***It sounds familiar.***"

"***How does it sound familiar? Grim has never had this happen to him before.***" Deathshriek glanced at Grim. "***I'm worried.***"

Fanghook happened to hear their conversation. He was secure enough with Bing, Bam, and Boom being around Gustav and Grim that he moved over to Deathshriek and Thornado.

"***Grim's having nightmares and can't remember them?***"

Deathshriek nodded. "***It's been going on for two weeks.***"

Fanghook tilted his head. "***My mother used to tell me stories about dragons having strange dreams.***"

"***Grim is not a dragon,***" said Thornado. "***I do know what you are talking about. I grew up with those stories as well.***"

Deathshriek gave a small nod. "***Premonitions; an ability in the dragons of old.***"

"***What are you talking about?***" Grim asked.

"***We should tell him,***" said Deathshriek. "***The little ones should learn this as well.***"

Thornado called Bing, Bam, and Boom over to them.

"Gustav, come here. You're about to hear some dragon lore."

Gustav came to sit next to Grim and Bing.

"Many generations ago, dragons were considered to be wise and magical beings among the humans," Grim translated. "They had power the humans wanted. When the humans could not obtain their magic, the dragons were killed. Many of the special abilities dragons have today are said to come from the magic the dragons once had."

Gustav's eyes were bright in wonder. "What kind of magic did they have?"

The little Thunder Drums were chattering the same thing.

"Magic of healing, human speech, hypnotism, premonition, and more," Grim continued to translate Thornado. "Some humans were willing to befriend these dragons and created bonds so strong with those dragons that -." Grim blinked in shock as he heard Thornado continue his story.

"Grim?" Gustav asked. "Are you okay?"

Grim swallowed hard. "That the humans gained some of their magic."

"Really?" asked Gustav. "Wow! I wonder if I'll ever learn magic from Fanghook."

"I do not know, Gustav," Grim said, recovering from the shock. "Dragons had their full magic a very long time ago."

"Nothing wrong with hoping, right?" Gustav said.

"I suppose not," said Grim.

The three little Thunder Drums decided they didn't want to sit still any longer and bounded off to play with Gustav, Fanghook following to keep an eye on them.

"**Many dragons can still feel the power of magic that runs in their blood,**" said Thornado. "**It manifests in different ways: fire, sound, camouflage, they're all ways of the magic in our blood.**"

"**Why have I not heard this before?**" Grim asked.

"**It is an old dragon's story,**" replied Thornado.

"**I did not think to tell you the story,**" said Deathshriek. "**We were so busy with learning to fly with each other and learning Dragonese. I never thought to tell you the story of the old dragons.**"

"**If you are having nightmares, perhaps you are having premonitions,**" said Thornado.

"**What good is a premonition if you cannot remember it?**" Grim asked.

"**I think you will recall it in time,**" said Thornado.

One of the little Thunder Drums began making a racket.

"**I need to check on them,**" said Thornado.

Grim nodded. He turned to Deathshriek. "**Is there anything else you would like to tell me?**"

"**Grim, please don't be upset. I was honest when I said I didn't think to tell you.**"

"**I am not angry, Deathshriek,**" Grim assured. "**Is there anything else would like to tell me?**"

Deathshriek thought for a moment. "**Yes. The origin myth of the Baleful Banshees.**"

"**The origin myth?**"

"**All dragons have origin myths, some more magnificent than others,**" explained Deathshriek. "**There is said to be a direct line from the old dragons to Baleful Banshees, along with other breeds like Skrills and Night Furies.**"

"**Night Furies? Toothless is your cousin!**" Grim had to smile.

"**Yes, he is my cousin,**" said Deathshriek. "**There is a reason why you humans call Night Furies the offspring of lightning and death itself. Night Furies, Skrills, perhaps even the Flightmare, all the dragons who have a direct line to the old dragons are powerful. All dragons are related to the old dragons in some way, but some are more closely related than others.**"

"**Like the Deaths?**" asked Grim.

Deathshriek nodded. "**Like the Deaths. Now, our myth that has been passed down from generation to generation is that Baleful Banshees were the ghosts of old dragons who were slain. That is not true, but we can move unseen, have haunting roars, and we are overall terrifying. We breathe blue, other-worldly fire and can sing with a silver voice. You can see how that can be magic.**"

Grim looked at the ground in thought. "**And the bond?**"

"**It has been so long since humans and dragons have been friends,**" said Deathshriek. "**You and the other riders are the first trustworthy humans in several generations. That does not count the rumors of Berserkers being able to control the Skrills. It is possible our bond is strong enough for me to pass on what little magic is still in my blood to you.**"

Grim only nodded.

"**Grim?**"

"**I am sorry, Deathshriek. I'm trying to take all this in,**" Grim said.

Deathshriek purred. "**Everything will be fine.**"

"**I have no doubt,**" Grim said.

* * *

><p>The night was not kind to Grim. He lay in his bed, twisted in his new coat and furs. Deathshriek was watching from where he lay next to Toothless.<p>

"**Something's wrong,**" Deathshriek said to Toothless. "**Grim is never cold.**"

"**Maybe he's just wrapping himself up for comfort. You know, how hatchlings do with their mother,**" said Toothless.

"**He has done that with me in the past, but that was when we first met,**" said Deathshriek.

"**Do you think he's sick?**" asked Toothless.

Deathshriek warbled. He wasn't sure himself. Grim was never prone to nightmares after the first few months on Grim Island. Deathshriek could only recall two times that Grim had been ill, once when he found him and once on Berk. Grim was very strong for a

human.

Deathshriek got up and went to Grim's side. "***Grim, what are you seeing?***"

He could hear chanting, but it was not in a language he studied. The chanting brought a sense of foreboding. He cringed and tried to block it out. It continued. It was burning. Flames of impossible colors rose up around him. Then it all went black and cold.

Grim sat up with a scream.

"**It's okay!**"

"**You are safe! Grim, it was just a dream.**"

"What's going on?"

There was thunder on the stairs.

"Grim."

Grim shook off the rest of the nightmare and looked at Stoick kneeling next to the bed. That explained the thunder.

"Grim, are you all right?" Stoick asked.

Grim nodded. He opened his mouth and the only thing that came out was a string of Irish. He tried again, but it was still in Irish.

"I think he's in shock," Hiccup said, sitting on the edge of his bed.

"Take your time, son," Stoick said.

Grim sat there for several moments, realizing that he wasn't able to speak in something they could understand.

"Hold on a second," said Hiccup. He grabbed something from under his bed. It was the medallion the witch from Scotland had given him. He slipped it over his head. "Okay, now try."

"I was dreaming," Grim said in Irish, but Hiccup was understanding it perfectly. The spell was working. "I dreamed I heard chanting that I did not understand. I saw fire in the colors of the rainbow. It went dark and cold after that. I think that's what I have been dreaming about."

"At least you remember something," said Hiccup.

Grim nodded and rested his back against the headboard.

Stoick looked from Grim to Hiccup. "You understood that?"

"Magic," said Hiccup, holding up the medallion. "A little gift we picked up from a certain witch in Scotland. It allows the wearer to understand any language."

"Which gives me an idea," Grim said, finding the proper language again. "Maybe if I sleep with my medallion on, I will be able to

understand what is being chanted."

"It's worth a shot," Hiccup said with a shrug.

Grim retrieved his medallion and slipped it over his neck. "I do apologize for waking everyone up."

Deathshriek cooed. "***If it is worth you remembering what your dream is about, then I will gladly miss a night's sleep.**"

"Don't worry about it," said Stoick. "Try to sleep. We will talk about this in the morning."

Grim nodded and lay back down.

Stoick went back downstairs to his room.

"Grim."

"Yes, Hiccup?"

"It'll be okay," Hiccup said.

For a moment, Hiccup thought Grim had fallen asleep. "I know."

* * *

><p>"Seven hearts of the land were harvested. Seven shadows were left in the ground. Seven fires soar the vast sky and hundreds more are silent in sound."<p>

The sense of foreboding had returned again. He drew himself back from it, but he could not block out the chanting. The fire sprang up around him again.

"Seven more shall join as ash, their anguished cries echoing in the night. The king will fall to his knees and beg for mercy and for life."

Everything went black and cold.

* * *

><p>Grim opened his eyes, but didn't jump up like the first time. He took a deep breath to steady himself. To his surprise, it was daylight. Hiccup's bed was empty and so was Toothless' slab. Deathshriek was curled up next to Grim's bed, watching him.<p>

"**Good morning,**" Deathshriek greeted.

Grim sat up and rubbed his eyes. "***What time is it?***"

"**You missed breakfast,**" said Deathshriek. "***I am going to hunt. Would you like me to find you anything special?***"

"**No. No breakfast.**" Grim got up and put his boots on. "***Where are the others?***"

"**At the Academy,**" Deathshriek replied. "***Do you want me to fly

you over there?*"

"*I think I want to walk,*" Grim said.

Deathshriek nodded and left.

Grim straightened his shirt and went downstairs, taking a small piece of bread from the table. He walked outside and started for the Academy.

"_Seven hearts of the land were harvested. Seven shadows were left in the ground. Seven fires soar the vast sky and hundreds more are silent in sound. Seven more shall join as ash, their anguished cries echoing in the night. The king will fall to his knees and beg for mercy and for life."_

Grim was confused. The talk about the hearts and shadows meant nothing to him and the seven soaring fires and even more were silent didn't make any sense. None of this really made any sense to Grim. Why, after all this time, was he having weird dreams? He wondered if what Thornado said about dragons being able to pass their magic along to humans was true.

He walked into the Academy before he knew it.

"Grim, look out!"

Grim was tackled to the ground and there was an explosion above him. He turned over and saw Astrid.

"Are you okay?" Astrid asked.

"I'm fine," replied Grim. "Thank you."

"Are you sure?" asked Fishlegs. "It's not like you to be so out of it."

"Yeah," said Ruffnut. "Barf and Belch nearly took your head off."

"That would have been cool," said Tuffnut.

Astrid helped Grim to his feet.

"I'm sorry," Grim said.

"Are you sure you're okay?" Astrid asked. "You look like you're ready to fall asleep on your feet."

"Can't take the heat?" Snotlout chuckled. "Maybe you should back out of training. There's no way you can keep up with me." He flexed his muscles.

Fishlegs frowned. "You're saying this about the guy who wrestles dragons for fun?"

"The dragons are going easy on him," Snotlout brushed off.

Grim pinched the bridge of his nose. "Hiccup, I need to speak with you."

Hiccup and Grim moved to the other side of the Academy to talk with some privacy.

"Did you have that dream again?" Hiccup asked.

"I did, and this time I understood what was being said," Grim replied. "I'm glad you thought to use the medallion."

"So what did you hear?" asked Hiccup.

"Seven hearts of the land were harvested. Seven shadows were left in the ground. Seven fires soar the vast sky and hundreds more are silent in sound. Seven more shall join as ash, their anguished cries echoing in the night. The king will fall to his knees and beg for mercy and for life.'"

Hiccup frowned. "I don't know about hearts and shadows, but the seven fires that soar the vast sky sound to me like dragons."

"Everything has to deal with the number seven," Grim said. "Seven hearts, seven shadows, seven fires. And I don't like how whatever that voice said about the seven fires joining the others as ash. Can you think of anything in Viking culture that may deal with seven dragons?"

"The only thing I can think of is the seven classes of dragons," replied Hiccup. "But that doesn't make sense. And what about the king?"

Grim sighed. "I don't know." He turned around and punched the wall. "I hate this!"

"Calm down," said Hiccup. "We'll figure this out. Maybe you should lie down for a while. You look paler than usual and you can pass for a ghost on a good day."

Grim slid down against the wall. "I'll sleep here."

Hiccup shrugged and walked away.

"Is he okay?" Fishlegs asked, looking at Grim with concern.

"Uh, I really don't know," said Hiccup. "It's Grim."

"Have you tried talking to him?" Astrid asked.

"I don't know what to say." Hiccup put his hands in his hair and gave a tug. "It's not that easy."

"What's not so easy about it?" asked Astrid. "You're just asking him what he's dreaming about."

Hiccup sighed. He didn't know how to answer that. Neither of them had told the other riders about the magic they acquired from the witch in Scotland.

"That's it!" Hiccup cried. He ran back over to Grim.

The other riders looked at each other.

"Hiccup's acting a little more odd than usual," said Fishlegs.

"That might have something to do with Grim not sleeping," said Astrid. "Hiccup looked tired himself."

* * *

><p>"Grim, wake up!"<p>

Grim was startled out of his doze by Hiccup. "What?"

"I have an idea," Hiccup said. "Maybe the Scottish witch will know what your nightmares are about."

Grim blinked. "Hiccup, that could actually work. Thank you."

* * *

><p>That night was the first night in two weeks that Grim didn't have nightmares. He only had a few hours of sleep before getting up. Hiccup and Toothless were sleeping. Grim got his pack from under the bed and went downstairs. He took a loaf of bread to eat on the flight to Scotland.<p>

Grim turned around and jumped, letting out a string of words in Irish. "Hiccup!" he hissed.

Hiccup was standing behind Grim with his arms folded. "And where do you think you're going?"

"Go back to bed, Hiccup," Grim hissed.

"Tell me or I'm telling Dad," Hiccup said firmly.

Grim hissed angrily. He took a deep breath and composed himself. "I am going to Scotland. I need answers."

"I know you need answers," said Hiccup.

"Then why are you stopping me?" Grim asked.

"Who said anything about stopping you?" Hiccup smiled. "I'm just trying to stop you from leaving without me."

"Hiccup, you don't have to come," said Grim.

"Yes, I do," said Hiccup. "If I don't go with you, who's going to make sure you come back in one piece? The last time you went to Scotland by yourself, Dad had to carry you back to Gothi's. I'm not going to let my brother go out there by himself. You would do the same for me."

Grim sighed. "All right."

"Good," said Hiccup. "Now can we go back to bed and wait until morning to leave instead of sneaking around?"

The brothers went back up to their room and went back to sleep.

* * *

><p>"You want to do what?" asked Stoick.<p>

"Go to Scotland," Hiccup repeated. "We know someone there that may be able to help Grim with his nightmares."

"They're just dreams, son," said Stoick.

"That is not what Thornado told me," said Grim.

Stoick turned to Grim. "You saw Thornado? How is he? And how are the little ones? Did they find another Thunder Drum yet?"

"Yes, I saw him. He is well and so are the little ones. And no, they did not find another Thunder Drum yet," Grim replied. "As for what Thornado tells me, my bond may be so strong with Deathshriek that he is passing some of the magic from his ancestors to me. If these dreams weren't so disturbing, I would not be going."

Stoick frowned. "What are you dreaming about, Grim?"

"Nothing that concerns Berk from what I can interpret," Grim answered. "Something about seven hearts and seven shadows. Hiccup figured out that part of what I dreamt has to do with dragons."

"And who better to deal with dragon affairs than the dragon speaker," Stoick said. He turned to Hiccup. "And the dragon trainer. Stay safe, you two. I expect you back in a week."

"Thanks, Dad!" Hiccup ran to pack and put everything in order.

* * *

><p>They each filled their packs with what they would need for an all day and part of the night flight. The riders packed dried fish and some water along with a change of clothes. Grim retrieved his sword Hiccup made for him and his bow and quiver so he could have another archery contest with the Scottish princess. He put on his dragon claw gloves and black dragon scale coat he recently made.<p>

Hiccup got his shield and found a thin sword he made several months ago. He wasn't very good with a sword, but he could use it. Grim had given Hiccup a few weapons lessons, but Hiccup was Hiccup and still wasn't that good with a blade.

Grim saw Hiccup was packing the sword. "Good. I feel better when you have a traditional weapon."

"What's wrong with the ones I make?" Hiccup asked.

"I mean no disrespect, Hiccup, but sometimes I worry your shield is going to malfunction," Grim replied.

"Well, I feel better with my shield because I know how it works," Hiccup said. He held up the sword. "And I was hoping someone would give me a lesson while we're there."

"Are you saying I'm a bad mentor?" Grim asked with a smirk.

"Not at all," said Hiccup. "I want to see other sword styles. You like using that large sword I made for you. I can't lift that to use it."

Grim checked his pack and sighed. "We shouldn't need that much gold, but I feel I am not bringing enough."

Hiccup held up a sack. "Maybe you'll want this now?"

"What's in there?" Grim asked, taking the sack. It was heavy. He opened it up and its contents sparkled in his eyes.

"The gold Trader Johann insists you take for your work," Hiccup replied. "He's been giving it to Dad, who's been giving it to me. That should be plenty for our trip."

"And many more," said Grim, still in shock of how much gold Trader Johann had been slipping the Haddock family behind his back.

Hiccup turned around and saw Stoick, Gobber, the riders, and their dragons.

Fearcloak let out a cry and attached himself to Grim. "***Do you have to go?***"

"**I won't be gone long,**" Grim assured.

"Be careful out there, you two," said Astrid. "And don't worry about the Academy. I'll keep everybody in line."

"Let me know if you see any new dragons," said Fishlegs.

"I have a notebook with me," said Hiccup. "If we learn anything new, I'll write it down and then we can put it in the Book of Dragons."

"I trust the rest of you will defend Berk if it needs it," Grim said.

"Of course," Snotlout waved off. "I'd like to see anybody try to invade Berk on my watch."

Astrid rolled her eyes.

Grim turned to the twins. "Can we keep the chaos to a minimum?"

"We make no promises," said Tuffnut.

Grim glanced at Barf and Belch.

"**We'll keep them out of trouble,**" said Belch.

"**We'll try anyway,**" Barf amended.

"**Everything will be fine,**" said Hookfang. "***Tell Ember-Ash I hope he is well.**"

"**I will,**" said Grim.

Stoick came up and put a hand on his sons' shoulders. "Look after

each other."

"We will," Hiccup said.

"Come back in one piece," Gobber added.

"I doubt we'll be doing anything that would put us at risk of not coming back in one piece," Hiccup chuckled. "We're not going after a Death."

Hiccup and Grim mounted Toothless and Deathshriek and took off. They waved good-bye and turned in the direction of Scotland.

Grim found a strong wind current the dragons could glide on.

They flew through the afternoon.

"Do you think we should stop?" Hiccup asked.

"I think we can go for a little farther," Grim told him. "We've been gliding. I don't think the dragons are that tired. **Toothless, Deathshriek, how are you feeling?**"

"**We can keep going for a little while,**" said Deathshriek.

"**I'm getting hungry,**" said Toothless.

"They will be fine for a little while yet," Grim translated for Hiccup. "Toothless is getting hungry."

They flew for another twenty minutes. Toothless and Deathshriek put their ear fins up. Grim stiffened.

"What's wrong?" Hiccup asked.

"The wind's changed." Grim turned around on Deathshriek's back. He frowned.

Hiccup looked over his shoulder. Black storm clouds were forming behind them. "Those don't look natural."

"I don't think they are," said Grim.

"We better get out of here," Hiccup said. "Hurry, Toothless."

"**Deathshriek, quickly,**" Grim urged.

The wind began to blow against them. The two dragons fought the wind, Grim trying to read the wind enough to get them away from the storm.

There was a bolt of lightning that was too close to them for comfort.

"Grim!" Hiccup shouted.

Grim turned around and saw the storm was about to be directly over them. "Hiccup, hold on! We are not outrunning this storm."

Hiccup secured himself to Toothless' saddle with the straps he linked to his belt. He worried for Grim, who didn't have a saddle.

The storm engulfed them and they clung to their dragons. Their dragons fought the winds, trying to stay in the air.

"We have to find someplace to land!" yelled Hiccup.

Grim was focusing on which way the wind was blowing, trying to find a safe way through the storm.

Toothless looked back at his tail. The fabric was beginning to tear.
"Hiccup!"

Hiccup fought to keep the tailfin under control. "Toothless! Come on, bud, we can do this."

The fabric on his tailfin tore completely and Toothless was blown about in the storm.

Hiccup yelled.

Grim looked back. "Hiccup!"

Deathshriek whirled around and followed after them. There wasn't much they could do. Deathshriek grabbed Toothless and tried to keep them all in the air.

Grim scanned everything around them, trying to find someplace they could land. There was nothing but clouds and rain.

"Hiccup, hold on! I'm here, brother!" Grim called.

Deathshriek let out a screech and he and Grim were tumbling over Toothless and Hiccup.

* * *

><p>And this is where I'm leaving you. Hopefully, I'll have the next chapter up soon, but this is just going to have to do for now. Leave a comment in the review section and I'll see you all for the next chapter.

2. Chapter 2

I am back again with another chapter. So far I only have four chapters of this story written. Hopefully I'll have another chapter written and ready to go for next week, but don't hold me to it.

* * *

><p>Hours later, Hiccup woke up on Toothless' back, still strapped to the saddle. They were on the ground and the storm had passed.<p>

"Toothless?"

Toothless looked back and saw Hiccup was awake.

Hiccup unhooked himself and slid off of Toothless' back. He put his hand to his head. "Toothless, where's Grim?"

It was Deathshriek who answered. The blue and black dragon lifted one black wing to reveal Grim lying underneath unconscious.

"Grim?" Hiccup stumbled over to Grim. "Grim."

Grim didn't twitch.

"He's still breathing," Hiccup said. "He's still alive at least."

"**Yes,**" said Deathshriek.

Toothless sniffed at Hiccup. "**Are you okay?**"

"I'm okay, bud," said Hiccup. "A little sore, but I'm okay. I'm more worried about Grim."

"**We all are,**" said Deathshriek. He settled down and draped his wing over Grim again.

"Where are we?" Hiccup asked.

There was nothing familiar about where they were. There were mountains to the north, but there weren't any cliffs or sea stacks.

"Do you think we're in Scotland?" Hiccup asked Toothless.

Toothless shook his head.

"I didn't think so either," said Hiccup. He turned around. "Let's look at your tail."

Toothless' prosthetic was bent and twisted, but by some miracle it was still strapped to his tail.

"The rods are bent," Hiccup said. "They'll need to be straightened or the tailfin won't work. Hopefully there's a forge around here."

Deathshriek put his head up. "**We don't need a forge. We only need the materials to make a new tailfin. Grim made his dragon scale clothes without a proper forge or tools.**"

"**Grim can help us once he wakes up,**" said Toothless.

Hiccup sighed. "I know you guys are trying to help, but I have no idea what you're saying."

Toothless nudged Hiccup to comfort him.

Hiccup couldn't do much until Grim woke up. He went through their packs to see what he could use to fix the tailfin. Hiccup found he could use a shirt for the cloth of the tailfin.

"Not much to work with," said Hiccup. He looked around. "Maybe there

is a town nearby or at least a house. Grim needs help."

Just as he said that, Grim groaned.

"Grim?" Hiccup called. "Grim, wake up."

Grim opened his eyes. They weren't focused in the least.

"Grim."

"Hiccup?" slurred Grim.

"I'm here," said Hiccup. He took Grim's hand and gave it a squeeze.

Grim shut his eyes again. "What happened?"

"The storm tossed us around and now I don't know where we are," Hiccup answered.

"What storm?" Grim asked.

Hiccup winced. "You don't remember?"

"I remember leaving Berk for Scotland," Grim said. He started to get up.

"**No, Grim,**" said Deathshriek. He pressed his nose to Grim's chest to keep him lying down. "**Rest.**"

Grim moaned.

"I can try to find some help," said Hiccup. "But Toothless is down. The wind completely tore his tailfin apart."

Grim opened his eyes partway. "Deathshriek, go with Hiccup. Toothless is more than capable of protecting me."

"Okay," said Hiccup. "We'll be back as quick as we can."

They left Grim and Toothless behind. Hiccup held on as tight as he could the way Grim showed him when riding an unsaddled dragon.

"Looks like we're not far from the ocean," said Hiccup, seeing the ocean in the distance. "And look! There's a lighthouse! Let's land out of sight and I'll see if there's anyone there."

Deathshriek grunted an affirmative.

It was difficult for Deathshriek to find a place to land close by without being seen. There were no cliffs or trees to hide them. He finally settled on disappearing, hoping no one would see the flying Viking before landing.

"I'll be back," Hiccup said, giving Deathshriek a pat on what he guessed was his nose.

Hiccup went up to the lighthouse and found a stone set in its

base.

"'The Bone Point Light' My light will shine like truth through the darkness,'" Hiccup read. "'I was born in the mind of Adin. I was made by the builders of Raladin. The magic of Tora protects me. Sailors in peril will bless me.' Well, there may be a couple of dragon riders who'll bless you, too."

Hiccup found the door and knocked. When he received no answer, he pushed the door open. "Hello? Anybody home?"

"Who is down there?" came a deep voice. A large man with a broad face, red hair, bushy red beard, and sea blue eyes came down the stairs. "What are you doing here, boy?"

"Oh, hi," Hiccup said. "My friends and I got a little lost. One of them got hurt and the others sent me to find some help."

The man looked at Hiccup, his eyes lingering on his prosthetic. "How hurt is your friend?"

Hiccup gave a shrug. "Enough to cause some concern, but I know he's taken harder hits. He'll have a bump on his head."

"Come in, boy," said the man. "I will see what I have you can use."

Hiccup closed the door behind him and followed the man up the stairs. He looked at the paintings on the walls. Each one was signed Verity.

"I have a few bandages and a little medicine," said the man. "What else do you need?"

"Do you know where there's a forge?" Hiccup asked. "Or if you have some scrap?"

"There is a little scrap in the basement," replied the man.

After getting the bandages and medicine, they went to the basement to see if there was any scrap Hiccup could use to fix Toothless' tailfin. There were some rods he could use and some canvas.

"I don't have much to pay you," Hiccup said, taking out a small pouch of gold. "I can pay you for the canvas."

The man looked at the gold pouch. "You have plenty, boy. A gold piece for everything will suffice."

"Are you sure?" asked Hiccup.

"Yes," replied the man. "You better get back to your friends."

Hiccup nodded. "Thanks for helping me out."

Hiccup turned around and the man noticed the dragon on his shield.

"Boy, where did you get that shield?" the man asked.

"I made it," Hiccup replied.

The man pressed his lips together in thought. "What is your name, boy?"

"My name's Hiccup."

"Hiccup? That is a strange name. I am Red Han, keeper of Bone Point Light. You be careful out there, Hiccup. Things in Deltora are much better than they were in the past, but there are still dangers."

"I'll be careful," said Hiccup.

Hiccup left the lighthouse and found Deathshriek, or rather Deathshriek found him. The Baleful Banshee had appeared directly in front of Hiccup less than a foot from his face. Hiccup jumped.

"Deathshriek!" he hissed in irritation.

Deathshriek laughed and turned for Hiccup to mount him.

They flew back to Toothless and Grim. Grim appeared to be much more alert, but Hiccup made him use the medicine and bandaged his head after finding a large bump on the side of his head.

"We're in a country called Deltora," Hiccup told Grim.

"That's a start," said Grim.

"Do you know anything about Deltora?" Hiccup asked.

"No, I never heard of such a place," Grim replied. "I do not know where we are."

"That's just great," said Hiccup. "What are we going to do?"

"The only thing I can think of doing right now is wait until dark," said Grim. "We may be able to tell where we are by the stars and make our way to Scotland." Grim got to his feet. "Either that, or we can try to find a town, or better yet, a city. Chances are they would have a map of the area and lands around it."

"We can follow the coastline and use the lighthouse as a marker so we don't get lost," said Hiccup. He turned to Toothless. "But we can't do anything until we fix your tail, Toothless."

"**Yes!**" Toothless barked.

"I think I can do almost everything without a forge," said Hiccup, looking at what he procured.

Grim smiled. "We have a forge." He patted Deathshriek's shoulder. "What do you need?"

With Grim and Deathshriek's help, Hiccup straightened the rods and attached the canvas to Toothless' tailfin.

"Perfect," said Hiccup.

* * *

><p>Toothless and Grim began following the coast south, keeping an eye on the beaches below them.<p>

"It's a gulf," Hiccup suddenly stated. "We started at Bone Point and made almost a U shape. Look ahead of us: there's a peninsula."

"And no towns along the way," Grim added. "Do these people not fish the coast?"

"Apparently not," said Hiccup. "We don't know how big Deltora is. There's land as far as we can see to the east. Maybe they farm more than they fish."

"The weather is warmer," Grim pointed out. "They would have different crops than what we have on Berk. They would not have to rely on trade ships like we do as much."

Toothless growled.

"What is it, bud?" Hiccup asked.

"He said this place smells like death," Grim said.

Toothless growled a little louder.

"Excuse me, it smells of death, but not as strong. It is a scent that lingers," Grim corrected.

Toothless and Deathshriek put their ear-fins up and came to a halt, hovering where they were.

"Okay," said Hiccup. "Now what? Grim?"

"**Deathshriek, what are you doing?**" Grim asked, putting a hand to his head. The sudden stop caused his headache to come back in force.

"**Another dragon,**" Toothless replied. "**I smell him. Two of them.**"

"There are other dragons out there," said Grim. "Toothless smells two of them."

Deathshriek growled and shook his head.

Toothless began growling the same way.

"What's going on with you, bud?" Hiccup asked. "I haven't seen him like this since Grindheart first came to Berk."

"They sense something," Grim stated unnecessarily.

"But what? What could get them both up like this?" Hiccup looked around. "I don't see anything."

"It's what you don't see that is the danger," Grim pointed out.

"And you would know a thing or two about that," Hiccup added, still looking around. "Do you see anything, bud?"

Toothless made the strange sound that allowed him to see in the dark. He flicked his ear-fins. "***Nothing.***"

"It's okay," Hiccup said, patting Toothless' head. "You tried. Maybe we should find a place to land."

A massive roar startled the four of them.

"That came from inland!" Hiccup yelled.

"I don't know what that was, but that was no dragon roar," Grim said, a bit spooked.

"Let's check it out!" Hiccup turned Toothless in the direction of the roar.

They flew in the direction of the roar quickly. What they saw shocked them.

A violet dragon that was the size of a Typhoomerang was fighting an equally large gray dragon. The dragon had a long neck, four legs, massive wings, and spines going down its back. Spines on the side of its head gave it a menacing appearance. Its talons were like meat hooks and glinted with blood in the pale light. They tangled in the air, scales and blood raining down on the ground.

"What in the name of Thor is that?" cried Hiccup.

"I do not like the look of the gray beast," Grim said. "There's something not right with it."

Toothless and Deathshriek growled in dark agreement.

There was another roar below them.

"There's another one!" Grim called.

They saw a much smaller, silvery dragon with a gray counterpart.

"That one looks like a baby!" Hiccup called back.

Grim did a double take and saw Hiccup was right.

"Grim, Toothless and I will take these two dragons up here," said Hiccup. "You and Deathshriek take the two on the ground."

"Stay safe, brother," said Grim, raising the hood of his coat.

"You, too," Hiccup nodded.

They separated, Hiccup and Toothless going after the violet and gray dragons and Grim and Deathshriek went down to the white and gray dragons.

"Toothless, plasma blast!" Hiccup ordered.

Toothless fired a plasma blast at the fighting dragons. It separated the two dragons and they snarled at each other.

Toothless let out a snarl and faced the gray dragon. The gray dragon may have looked like a dragon and may have sounded similar to a dragon, but it certainly was not a dragon by the scent of it.

"I figured as much," Hiccup said. He looked over at the violet dragon. It was bleeding from several large gashes.

The gray dragon looked from the violet dragon to Toothless. It opened its mouth to fire.

"Plasma blast!" Hiccup called out.

Toothless fired multiple plasma blasts at the gray dragon.

Below, Grim and Deathshriek had landed and Grim launched himself off Deathshriek's back and onto the small gray dragon. He extended his Gronkle iron tipped dragon claws and slashed the back of the small gray dragon. Grim jumped off and retracted his claws and drew his sword.

Deathshriek allowed his white markings become visible and growled low, preparing to strike. He glanced over at the silvery dragon and saw that it was scared. He turned back to the small gray dragon.

"**Grim, that thing is not a dragon,**" Deathshriek said, smelling the foul stench that was not dragon scent by any means. "**It is a fight to the death.**"

Grim grunted in understanding.

Above their heads, Toothless twisted in the air and fired another plasma blast, catching the gray dragon under the wing. The violet dragon breathed purple flames at the gray dragon. Toothless swooped around and fired again, hitting it in the back this time.

Hiccup could see the gray dragon was getting overwhelmed with the two dragons attacking it, even if one was already wounded. He wondered how well Grim and Deathshriek were doing.

Grim, in his black coat, looked like a shade with a sword in his hands. Beside him was Deathshriek looking like something otherworldly with his white markings. Both of them had put themselves between the white and gray dragons, facing the gray dragon.

The small gray dragon lashed out at Grim. Grim twisted away and swung his sword. It connected with the side of the beast's head and cut it. The blood that ran down its face was not red, but black.

Deathshriek pounced on the gray dragon and bit at it. The small gray dragon rolled and threw Deathshriek off him. Deathshriek got to his feet and used his shriek. The small gray dragon was sent stumbling back. Deathshriek used his moment of disorientation to fire his blue flame at it. It was a directed hit and the small gray dragon decided it had enough. It took off, passing the fighting dragons in the air and howling at the larger gray dragon.

Toothless fired one more plasma blast at the larger gray dragon and struck directly in the face. That dragon also thought it had enough and followed the smaller dragon.

"Good job, bud," said Hiccup. "You okay?"

Toothless grunted and nodded.

Hiccup turned around the violet dragon. The violet dragon was staring at Hiccup and Toothless. Hiccup was a little on edge. He gently urged Toothless to the ground to check on Grim and Deathshriek. The violet dragon followed them down.

"Are you two okay?" Hiccup called to Grim and Deathshriek.

"We're fine," Grim said, putting his sword away and dropping his hood. He turned to the silvery dragon and took his gloves off. "Now let's see how wounded you are."

Grim was careful in his approach. Deathshriek stayed within striking distance to defend Grim if need be. Grim put his bare hand out and stopped a few feet in front of the silvery dragon.

The silvery dragon was only slightly smaller than Toothless and Deathshriek. As he got closer, Grim saw the scales were near colorless and shimmered in the pale light.

"**It is all right,**" Grim warbled.

It sniffed his hand, but didn't press its nose into his hand. Grim carefully backed away.

"Do you want to see if it will respond to you?" Grim asked Hiccup. "You have a better way with them."

Hiccup nodded and came over to the silvery dragon. He put his hand up like Grim did. "It's okay. I'm not gonna hurt you."

The silvery dragon sniffed Hiccup like it did Grim. Hiccup turned his head away and closed his eyes and waited. The silvery dragon pressed its nose into Hiccup's hand. Hiccup turned and smiled. He turned back to Grim. "Sometimes you have to look away."

Grim came forward again, slowly and keeping his hands away from himself. "All right, little one, let's see if you're hurt." He glanced at Hiccup. "Check the other. I know that one's bleeding badly. Take Deathshriek with you."

Hiccup nodded and took Toothless and Deathshriek over to the violet dragon.

The silvery dragon let Grim touch it. Grim carefully ran his hands over the dragon's snout and looked for blood. It didn't look like the dragon was hurt, just scared. It kept looking to the violet dragon.

Hiccup was slow in his approach of the much larger dragon. Toothless and Deathshriek flanked Hiccup.

The violet dragon was completely focused on Hiccup. There was an intelligence and gentleness in its eyes. It put its head down to Hiccup and pressed its nose into Hiccup's hand when he offered it.

"This one is fine," Grim called softly. "A little shook up, but it could have been much worse."

"That's good news," Hiccup said. He examined the violet dragon. One of the first things he noticed after seeing the wounds was that its entire underside was covered in camouflaging scales that were currently dark like the sky and tinged with some of the same shade of violet the rest of it was. "Wish I could say the same with you," he muttered. "You're all torn up."

"I will heal, young one."

Hiccup jumped and yelped.

Grim swung around to the four of them.

Toothless and Deathshriek were startled as well.

None of them were expecting the violet dragon to speak in a human language.

"Okay, I wasn't expecting you to talk," Hiccup said, taking a deep breath.

"At least not in something you can understand." Grim turned to the silvery dragon. "Do you speak, too?"

"Yes," replied the silvery dragon. It was obviously young and female judging from the voice.

Grim gave her a final pet and went to join Hiccup.

"**Old dragons,**" Toothless warbled softly.

"**Very old dragons,**" Deathshriek agreed.

Grim ran his hand across Deathshriek's wing. "What were those things? They were not dragons."

Deathshriek growled in agreement.

"They are products of sorcery," growled the violet dragon. "An evil that has somehow managed to force its way into Deltora, despite the sorcery of the Belt."

Grim began examining the violet dragon's wounds. The blood had slowed and was clotting on the gashes in the beginnings of healing.

"The Belt?" Hiccup asked.

"The Belt of Deltora," the violet dragon replied. "The Belt was forged by Adin, the first king of Deltora. He made the Belt to unite the seven tribes. Each of the tribes gave their tribe's talisman, a Great Gem mined from their land."

Grim paused in his examination.

Hiccup noticed, but continued to listen.

"The Great Gems are powerful by themselves, but together, they keep out any evil that should try to invade Deltora," the violet dragon continued.

"Almost any evil apparently," said Hiccup.

The violet dragon growled darkly. "The Shadow Lord, the dark sorcerer to our north must be using powerful magic indeed to defy the Belt."

"Hiccup." Grim had stopped what he was doing. He was very, very pale and his eyes were wide. "Do you remember what I said I heard in my dream?"

Hiccup let out a small gasp. "How many dragons are left in Deltora?"

"There are seven left," said the violet dragon. "One of each territory. There used to be many."

Hiccup turned back to Grim.

"Seven hearts," said Grim. "Seven fires."

"Seven dragons," Hiccup added. "It's not the Shadow Lord. Grim?"

Grim swayed. "I think I'm going to be sick." He closed his eyes and crumpled to the ground.

"Grim!" Hiccup hurried over to him. "Grim, wake up."

Deathshriek gave Grim a nudge. "***Grim.***"

Hiccup checked the bandage around Grim's head. It wasn't bleeding. "Grim."

Grim's eyes fluttered open. "What happened?"

"You passed out," Hiccup said. "Just stay down. I think your head injury is worse than you thought."

Grim gave a quick smile and closed his eyes again.

Hiccup frowned. "Or you knew how bad your head was and didn't tell me. Geez, Grim!"

Deathshriek settled down next to Grim and covered him with a wing.

"Is your friend all right?" the silvery dragon asked.

"He's fine," said Hiccup. "Stubborn, but fine. He hit his head when we crash landed north of here at the Bone Point Light. I had to find something to repair Toothless' tailfin with and I saw Grim had a bump on his head. Red Han, the light keeper at the lighthouse, gave me

some supplies and medicine. Grim insisted he was fine. I should've known better. Grim hasn't been sleeping so well. He's been having nightmares."

"What about?" the violet dragon asked.

"We never knew what they were about until a couple days ago," said Hiccup. "Grim was going to sneak off to see someone we knew who could tell us what the dreams could have meant. He dreamt of colored flames that were snuffed out and someone chanting."

"What was the chant?" the violet dragon asked.

Hiccup took a moment to recall it. "'Seven hearts of the land were harvested. Seven shadows were left in the ground. Seven fires soar the vast sky and hundreds more are silent in sound. Seven more shall join as ash, their anguished cries echoing in the night. The king will fall to his knees and beg for mercy and for life.'"

The silvery dragon warbled in distress.

"We figured out the seven fires were dragons," said Hiccup. "And just now when you said about the Great Gems, I think it's safe to say those are the seven hearts."

"And the seven shadows?" the silvery dragon asked.

"Those gray fakes," Hiccup suggested with a shrug.

"We must tell the king," said the violet dragon. "He must be warned about this. When your friend is well enough to travel, take the dragons you came with and continue southeast. You will find the city of Del. There the king lives. You tell him what you told us."

"Aren't you going to come with us?" Hiccup asked.

"No," said the violet dragon. "The remaining dragons swore an oath to Dragonfriend that we would not cross our borders to take advantage of them in their sleep. We dragons are territorial by nature and stay in our own territories. I am already breaking that rule by staying with the last Diamond dragon until she is old enough to protect her land and take care of herself."

"Is the dragon of Del going to be as nice as you two have been?" Hiccup asked.

"The dragon of faith, the Topaz dragon, will most likely believe you are invaders and defend his territory," the violet dragon answered.

Hiccup sighed. "Well, it wouldn't be the first time we've dealt with territorial dragons. The Topaz dragon is about your size, right?"

"Perhaps a little larger," admitted the violet dragon.

"Good. He's not Screaming Death big. That's a relief." Hiccup looked over at Toothless. "I've had enough of mountain sized dragons for a while."

"**Me, too,**" Toothless agreed.

The violet dragon took a closer look at Hiccup and Toothless. "You've saddle this black dragon like a horse."

"It's the only way I can control his prosthetic," said Hiccup. "Toothless can't fly without help. See?"

Toothless turned and held out his tail.

"Toothless lost his left tailfin," said Hiccup. "I made him a new one."

"Why?" asked the silvery dragon.

Hiccup turned to her. "A downed dragon is a dead dragon. I had to get Toothless back up in the air somehow. I made him one he could operate himself, but he likes this one."

Hiccup ended up telling the violet and Diamond dragons his story about when he met Toothless up until he met Grim and Deathshriek.

"You named these dragons," the violet dragon said in realization.

Hiccup nodded.

"To a dragon, their name is a closely guarded secret," said the violet dragon. "To have one know a being's name is to have power over that being. It is why we keep our names a closely guarded secret. But you have named these dragons. It is different."

"Well, you already know my name; it's Hiccup."

"And an odd name it is," said the violet dragon.

"I'm an odd Viking," Hiccup shrugged. "Hiccup is like calling someone a runt. I've always been small. I'm not very strong. But I use my head more than the other Vikings back home."

"Well, I know your names," said the violet dragon. "Perhaps it is fair for me to reveal my true name."

"You know my true name," said Hiccup. "Like you said, we named our dragons. And Deathshriek and the dragons on Grim Island named Grim."

"They named a human?" the silvery dragon asked.

Hiccup looked over at Deathshriek, who was still covering Grim with his wing. "I don't know how much I can tell you without Grim coming after me. Grim's tribe kicked him out. He became friends with a dragon and they found out about it. They banished him and killed the dragon. They wanted to erase him from their history and Grim wanted nothing to remind him of his life there. He never told me his real name in case someone came around asking questions: plausible deniability."

"I understand," said the violet dragon. "As the dragon of the Amethyst, the dragon of truth, I can understand why he would not want you to have to lie on his behalf."

Hiccup thought for a moment. "I don't think Grim's ever outright lied to me before. Usually he's hiding how bad his injuries are, but not much more than that. I was the first human he willingly shared secrets with. I know more about him than anyone else on Berk."

"I heard him growl and snarl like a dragon," said the Amethyst dragon.

"Grim's learned how to speak Dragonese," said Hiccup. "He told me there wasn't much to do other than fly on Deathshriek and find food. There certainly wasn't anybody else to talk to besides dragons."

"You have dragons where you are from," said the Amethyst dragon. "What are they like?"

"Nothing like you," Hiccup replied. "They don't speak human language, but they do understand it. They come in many shapes and sizes, and Bork the Bold created the Book of Dragons to record all the different types of dragons. Toothless is a Night Fury, said to be the offspring of lightning and death itself. Not much was known about the breed before I met Toothless. Before me, no one ever saw a Night Fury and lived to tell about it. As for Deathshriek, he's a Baleful Banshee. Their scream is bone-chilling and can be heard for miles. It's scary when you're close by. There are others like Monstrous Nightmares and Deadly Nadders. Nightmares can be vicious and like to light themselves on fire and Nadders can be vain and shoot spines from their tails, but they are loyal to their riders. The dragons are just as different as people are."

"You are very knowledgeable," said the Amethyst dragon.

"I'm in charge of the Dragon Training Academy," said Hiccup. "I have to know as much as I can about dragons. Grim, you can call him my second, and then comes my girlfriend. She's the best fighter her age on Berk, next to Grim. Enough of about us. You said there are seven dragons and you said one is the Topaz dragon and you are the Amethyst. What are the others?"

"The little one here is the dragon of the Diamond. There are also the dragons of the Ruby, Opal, Lapis Lazuli, and Emerald."

"**Emerald?**" Deathshriek raised his head from where he was checking on Grim. He looked back at Grim. "**Grim is not going to like this.**"

"**Maybe he will,**" said Toothless. "**Maybe it will remind him of his Emerald and loosen up a little.**"

"His Emerald?" the Diamond dragon asked. "What does that mean? Grim knows another Emerald dragon?"

Hiccup shook his head. "Grim's first dragon friend was a Deadly Nadder with emerald green scales. He named him Emerald. He took his death very hard."

The Amethyst dragon nodded. "Each of the dragons represents a Gem. Each Gem has a special power. The Great Gems were united with the tribes by Adin when he made the Belt of Deltora."

"Huh," said Hiccup. "I never thought of gems having some sort of power."

There was a loud yawn. The Diamond dragon smacked her lips after her yawn, her eyes barely open.

"I think it's someone's bedtime," Hiccup said with a smile. "Doesn't sound like a bad idea."

"We should sleep here," said the Amethyst dragon. He looked at his wounds that were full of clotted blood. "I am in no condition to fly like this."

Hiccup curled up under Toothless and they all went to sleep.

* * *

><p>A bit of action and some introduction to the characters of Deltora. I hope that I'm staying true enough to them. There's a reason I fell in love with this book series and I don't want to mess it up.

3. Chapter 3

Yes, I know I've been gone for a long time, but that's life. I won't make any more excuses for it. Hopefully you've all had a chance to become familiar with the rest of the series. Now, moving on.

* * *

><p>In the morning, the Amethyst dragon told them where to find the king. "You must fly southeast along the coastline. Del sits at Deltora's most southern point."<p>

"How will we get to talk to him?" asked Grim. "I do not believe he will drop everything to meet with two foreigners."

"You're right," said Hiccup. "Even Dad has trouble seeing people who live on Berk."

Grim thought for a moment. He turned to the Amethyst dragon. His wounds were healing quickly and some of his scales were still falling out to make room for replacement scales.

"What if we showed him one of your scales?" asked Grim.

"My scales?" The Amethyst dragon looked at his healing wounds. "I suppose he would understand I sent you to him."

Grim carefully examined the damaged scales to see which one he could pluck without hurting the dragon. He chose one that was loose and almost whole and plucked it easily. The Amethyst dragon twitched reflexively, but there was no pain. Grim handed the scale to Hiccup, who inspected it.

"This is perfect," said Hiccup. He put the violet scale into his pocket. "Thanks for helping us."

"We should be thanking you, young rider, for helping us against those false dragons," said the Amethyst dragon. He bowed his head. "I wish you a safe journey and I truly hope the Topaz dragon does not give you trouble."

"If he does," Hiccup said, patting Toothless' head, "we'll find out if he can keep up with a Night Fury."

The Amethyst dragon turned. "And your friend?"

"If the Topaz dragon can catch us, then we deserve to be caught," Grim said.

"**Agreed,**" said Deathshriek.

Hiccup and Grim got up on their dragons.

"Can you visit again soon?" asked the Diamond dragon. "Maybe we could play together?"

Grim smiled. "I would like that."

Hiccup laughed. "You haven't met a hatchling you didn't like, have you?"

They took off, waving behind them to the Amethyst and Diamond dragons.

As directed by the Amethyst dragon, they traveled the southern coast.

"Fake dragons," Hiccup muttered with a shake of his head. "How do you think we're going to fight them?"

"The same way we fought them last night," Grim replied.

Hiccup let out a small groan.

"What is it, brother?" Grim asked.

"Something's bugging me," Hiccup answered.

"Then speak," said Grim.

"It's about the chant," said Hiccup. "The seven shadows; who's controlling them?"

Grim stiffened on Deathshriek's back. "I never thought of it. I thought there were only seven shadow dragons, not someone controlling them. What makes you think there is someone?"

"Dragons don't go out of their way to kill something unless it's for food," said Hiccup. "And the way the chant was worded, it just makes me think there is someone controlling them. It sounds like revenge on the king. If it were just dragons, they would just go after the other dragons."

Grim sighed heavily. "Perhaps that is a blessing. I feel better going after a human than a dragon."

"But they aren't real dragons," Hiccup reminded him.

Grim nodded. "That is true."

Del began to come into view. There was a wall around the city. In the middle was a massive palace. It had three floors with a large tower in the center. The palace was built from sandstone with roofs of slate. The windows were filled with glass. It was very elegant.

"It's beautiful," Hiccup said in awe. "Are castles in Ireland like this?"

"They are not built like this," Grim replied.

They found a place where they could land and hide their dragons near the palace. Hiccup and Grim hid their weapons, only taking ones they could easily conceal. Hiccup wore his shield on his back and kept a dagger tucked in his belt, hidden by this vest. Grim kept his gloves on and closed his coat to hide a knife he fashioned out of a dragon spine that he kept in a camouflaged sheath across his chest.

"Do you have the scale?" Grim asked.

"Yep," Hiccup replied, holding up the scale. It sparkled in the sunlight.

The brothers walked up to the front of the palace where there was a line of people. They were mostly peasants, but there were a few nobles.

"There's a lot of people here," said Hiccup. "Do you think we'll be able to see the king?"

"We will," said Grim. "One way or another, my brother, we will."

Guards dressed in blue opened the gates and the people were led into the palace. They went to the great hall where the meeting would take place. The hall was had polished marble floors, marble columns, and the great hall was bordered in gold. There were paintings on the ceiling depicting what they assumed were of Deltora's history.

Hiccup turned to Grim. "Are you okay?"

"Why wouldn't I be?" Grim asked, a little ice in his voice.

"Because we're in a palace, we're about to see the king, and with your history. . ." Hiccup trailed off.

Grim turned to Hiccup and gave him a tight smile. "I will be fine. Let's worry about what we have to do right now."

People bowed as the king came in. Grim, accustomed to protocol and aware Hiccup was not, pushed Hiccup down by the scruff of his neck.

When they rose, Grim and Hiccup saw a young man older than them, but maybe Dagur's age, sitting on the throne.

"He's just a kid," muttered Hiccup.

Grim couldn't hide his surprise.

The young king sat on the throne dressed in fine clothes. His dark hair was not very long and was simply brushed back and held in place by his crown. Though his face was youthful, his eyes had seen many things. Around his waist was a belt set with seven large gems. At the clasp were a large amethyst and diamond.

"The Belt of Deltora," Hiccup whispered.

Grim looked at the large man standing by the throne at the king's right hand. He was strong, dressed in the same blue as the other guard. His black hair and beard were clipped neatly.

Hiccup leaned over to Grim. "Do you have a plan?"

"Patience, Hiccup," Grim said softly. "One does not do well in court by just throwing themselves into things. It is much like a game of chess. It is all about strategy."

They listened as the nobles gave their reports on the trade with the people across the western sea. Farmers gave their accounts about their crops and how well they were growing. Peasants from the city asked for what food could be spared. From what Hiccup and Grim understood, the country was recovering from famine.

"What about the mean dragon, Mama?"

Hiccup looked down and saw a little boy tugging at his mother's skirt.

"We need to tell King Lief about the mean dragon," the little boy said.

"Hush!" the mother urged. She looked around to see if anyone had heard the boy.

Hiccup knelt down. "What mean dragon?" he asked the boy.

The boy turned to Hiccup. "The mean dragon that keeps burning our farm."

The mother was looking distraught.

Grim placed a hand on her shoulder. "Do not scold the boy for what has happened."

"What did this dragon look like?" Hiccup asked.

"It was very big," said the boy. "It looked like the dragon King Lief spoke to, but it was not as gold. It looked sick."

"Sick how?" asked Hiccup. "Was it too thin? Could it stay in the air?"

"No," the boy said with a shake of his head. "It was not thin and it stayed in the air. It just looked sick."

Hiccup looked up at the mother.

"Its scales were not gold like the great gold dragon of Os-Mine Hills," the mother said. "They appeared washed out and they were gray in some places."

Hiccup looked at Grim. They were both thinking the same thing. There was a false dragon in the area. The Amethyst and Diamond dragons had trouble fighting off the gray fakes last night and may have lost if Hiccup and Grim hadn't shown up with their dragons. Both knew it was possible the Topaz dragon was wounded or dead somewhere.

"The king must be told about this," Grim said.

"You're not the only ones to see those dragons," said Hiccup.

The mother turned back to the king. "Your majesty," she called out to get his attention.

The king looked to her.

"I am Luca, mother of Denrir, wife of Borran the tailor," the mother said. "I wish to inform you my son and I have spotted a dragon near our farm. It is not the great dragon you have spoken to. It has been terrorizing the farms around our own."

Whispers started around the hall.

"It cannot be a dragon!" cried someone. "King Lief has promised the dragons would not harm us. The great dragons saved us all not one year ago!"

"What if it is the dragon that saved us?" someone else asked. "What if it is not as good as we were led to believe?"

"A dragon can kill us all!"

"It attacked Del once! It will do it again!"

The king began to try to restore order. Even the large man that stood next to the throne tried to help.

"Oh, this is going well," muttered Hiccup.

"Cover your ears," said Grim.

Hiccup looked at Grim and frowned. "What are you going to do?"

Grim glanced at Hiccup. "Cover your ears," he said again.

Hiccup covered his ears. He watched Grim took a deep breath, filling his lungs as much as he could.

"SILENCE!" Grim's shout was loud, clear, and mixed with a Baleful Banshee roar.

Hiccup winced and rubbed his ears. The silence was sudden and pure.

Hiccup thought he went deaf for a moment.

"Now," Grim said at a much more acceptable volume, "I understand you have been told the great dragons are helpful and would not harm you without reason. Am I right?"

Hiccup looked over at the king and saw him give a nod to Grim.

"Perhaps it is not the great dragons that are your concern," said Grim. He looked at the king.

The king frowned. "Who are you?"

"We are simply two concerned travelers who had come across these creatures," Grim replied.

Hiccup pulled the violet scale out of his pocket and showed it to the king. "Truth sent us. He told us to show you this."

The king's eyes widened. "Barda, take these travelers to the study. We will speak in private there."

The large man turned to the brothers. "Follow me."

Hiccup and Grim followed Barda out of the hall and up a flight of stairs. They stopped outside of a door.

"I will ask you to leave your weapons with me," Barda said.

"We would prefer to keep our weapons, what few we have on our persons," Grim said. "A gesture of good faith if you will."

"We're not here to hurt anybody," Hiccup said.

Barda didn't look convinced.

"Our weapons stay with us," said Grim. "But you may know what we have on ourselves. I have a dagger and several small blades hidden on my person. My brother only has a dagger and his shield."

Barda opened the door. There was a large table with several chairs. Hiccup removed his shield and hung it on the back of one chair and sat down. Grim did the same with his coat.

A few minutes later, the king came in with a young woman with wild black hair and green eyes. She didn't wear a dress like a noble woman would. She wore pants and boots and a tunic. She glared at the riders when she saw them. Sitting on her shoulder was a ball of dark fur that looked at them with large eyes.

Grim quickly stood up and bowed. Hiccup awkwardly mimicked him, his prosthetic foot scraping on the floor when he moved.

"Take your seats," said the king. "We are in private; I do not expect the friends of the dragon of the Amethyst to stand on ceremony. My name is Lief. This is Barda, the captain of the guard, and Jasmine."

"My name is Grim. This is Hiccup, my brother. We come from the far

north from an island called Berk. We arrived in Deltora yesterday."

"Yesterday?" Barda asked. "How did you meet the dragon of the Amethyst and come here all in a day?"

"We have our ways," Hiccup said with a shrug.

"We came across the dragons of the Amethyst and the Diamond being attacked by two other dragons," said Grim.

"They weren't dragons," said Hiccup. "They just looked like dragons. The Amethyst dragon even said so."

"They resemble the Deltoran dragons, but they are gray," said Grim. "However, based on what the boy told Hiccup and I before the woman began speaking to you, I believe they may be able to mimic the Deltoran dragons. Have you seen the dragon of the Topaz recently?"

"No," replied Lief. "The dragon of the Topaz would not come to Del again unless it was important. The last time it was in Del, the people were not kind to it."

"We saw how those fake dragons fought with the Amethyst and Diamond dragons," said Hiccup. "If we hadn't come across them, I don't want to think what would have happened. We need to find the dragon of the Topaz."

Lief placed his hand on the Belt, running his fingers to where the golden gem was. He closed his eyes for a moment.

"The dragon is not answering me," he said quickly.

"Do you know where it is?" asked Hiccup.

"Os-Mine Hills," replied Lief. "That's where its nest is."

"I will have the horses saddled," said Barda.

"It will take too long to get to the dragon on horseback," Lief said with a shake of his head.

Hiccup smiled. "We have something a bit faster."

Hiccup and Grim hurried out to the courtyard with Lief, Barda, and Jasmine behind them. Hiccup cupped his hands to his mouth and called for Toothless. Grim let out the shrieking call for Deathshriek.

A few moments later, people started screaming and there were several loud barks.

"**Move, Deathshriek!**"

"**You're heavy!**"

There was a crash and a yelp of protest. A second later, Toothless came charging over to Hiccup.

"**There you are! We were getting worried!**"

"Toothless! Hey, buddy!" Hiccup opened his arms to the Night Fury. Toothless happily accepted the hug.

Deathshriek walked over with more dignity. "***You were worried. I knew Grim and Hiccup were fine.**"

"Are they dragons?" asked Jasmine, her green eyes wide.

"Yes, they are," said Hiccup. "This is Toothless. He's a Night Fury, the fastest known dragon."

Toothless looked at the three strangers and put his ear fins back. He sniffed at Lief and growled, pulling back. "***He doesn't smell right.**"

"It's okay, Toothless," said Hiccup. He took Lief's hand and pulled him forward. "Say hello."

Toothless sniffed at Lief again.

Hiccup turned to Grim. "What's up with Toothless?"

"He can sense the Belt," said Grim. "It's like when we visited the Scottish witch. The dragons can sense the magic. They can sense much more than we can."

Toothless purred. "***He doesn't smell evil.**" He pressed his nose into Lief's hand.

Jasmine came to stand beside Lief. "He is friendly."

"Yeah, he usually is," said Hiccup. "Dragons aren't mindless, bloodthirsty creatures. They can be territorial, but they don't go out of their way to hurt someone. Night Furies are said to be the offspring of lightning and death itself, but look at Toothless."

Toothless gave a gummy smile and tilted his head to the side.

Barda was only paying so much attention to Toothless. The other dragon had not escaped his attention. "And this one?"

Grim gave Deathshriek's head a rub. "This is Deathshriek. He is a Baleful Banshee dragon, a cousin of the Night Fury dragons."

Deathshriek bowed.

Hiccup turned to Toothless and Deathshriek. "We need to find the Topaz dragon. There's a chance it might hurt."

"***Then what are we waiting for?***" asked Toothless.

"They are ready when we are," said Grim. "I need to retrieve the rest of the weapons."

Grim jumped onto Deathshriek and they flew over the wall.

"Grim will be back in a few minutes," said Hiccup. He looked at the

group. "We only have two dragons and, no offense, Barda, but Lief and Jasmine are better suited to ride our dragons."

Grim and Deathshriek returned. Grim now had his large sword on his back along with his bow and quiver and was carrying Hiccup's thin blade. He returned the blade to Hiccup.

"Who is riding with who?" Grim asked.

"Toothless is the only dragon with a saddle," said Hiccup. "Who is comfortable riding a dragon bareback?"

"I can," said Jasmine.

"You will ride with me," Grim said.

"We need to put a few things in order," said Lief.

"Be quick about it," Grim said sharply.

Lief, Barda, and Jasmine hurried back inside.

Hiccup turned to Grim. "You didn't need to say it like that."

Twenty minutes later, Jasmine returned with a black bird perched on her shoulder. She had changed her clothes into something more suitable for travelling. She now wore a dark jacket over a dark tunic and leggings. "This is Kree," she said. The furry creature on her other shoulder made a squeaking sound. "And this is Filli."

Grim nodded. "Keep those two tucked in your jacket when we fly. Filli will fly off if he doesn't hold on and Kree will never be able to keep up with us."

The black bird gave an indignant squawk.

Grim looked at Kree. "I have not seen a dragon that can match the Night Fury's speed. You would not have a chance."

"And what makes you think your dragon can keep up?" Jasmine asked.

"Deathshriek and I use our knowledge of wind currents to keep up with Toothless and Hiccup," replied Grim.

Hiccup decided to defend Deathshriek's abilities. "Deathshriek is no slouch when it comes to speed either, but the speed of a Night Fury is far superior."

Deathshriek nodded in Hiccup's direction. "***Thank you.***"

"You're welcome," said Hiccup, understanding the gesture.

Deathshriek moved so he was standing beside Jasmine.

Grim held out his hand to her. "Hop up here and make yourself comfortable. Deathshriek and I never used a saddle and I do not see a time when we ever will. While we are waiting for the king, you should get used to it."

Jasmine took Grim's hand and allowed him to help her up behind him on Deathshriek. "This is not my first time riding a dragon. I have ridden three of the dragons of Deltora," she said haughtily.

"A dragon of Deltora," said Grim. "But not a dragon of Berk." He gave Deathshriek a nudge with his foot to start him walking.

Jasmine held on to Grim as Deathshriek walked around.

Another ten minutes passed until Lief returned in travelling clothes with Barda and two other people. One was a man with dark hair in dark clothes and a nasty scar across his face and the other was a richly dressed woman with dark hair and similar features to Lief.

"Lief, I advise against this," said the man.

"I have to find the dragon of the Topaz," said Lief. "These two saw these false dragons."

The man turned to Jasmine. "Jasmine."

"We will keep them safe," said Grim.

Toothless stood so Lief could get on.

"Be safe, Lief," said the woman.

"I will, Mother," Lief replied.

"We'll be fine," said Hiccup. He leaned forward. "Let's go, bud."

Toothless barked in reply.

Hiccup shifted the tailfin into place and they took off with Deathshriek following closely behind them.

Lief directed them to the north.

"Os-Mine Hills sit on the border of Topaz and Ruby territories," Lief told them. "If we need help, I hope the dragon of the Ruby will aid us."

"Our dragons are strong," Grim called over to Lief.

"You have a lot of confidence in them," said Jasmine.

"My lady, Deathshriek and I have been through much over the two years we've known each other," Grim said.

"Toothless and I haven't been together as long, but we've been through a lot, too," Hiccup added to Lief.

Lief had not failed to notice that Hiccup's left leg was missing below the knee. He wondered if that had anything to do with the fact the black dragon was missing a tailfin.

Toothless growled.

"What is it, bud?" asked Hiccup.

"They sense something," said Grim, running his hand over Deathshriek's head.

"We are almost there," Lief said.

There was a loud roar that echoed.

"The dragon!" cried Jasmine.

"That's no dragon roar," Grim shouted over her.

"What do you mean?" asked Jasmine.

"I know what a dragon roar sounds like and that was not a true dragon roar," Grim explained. "It was just nonsense."

"How are you so sure?" Jasmine demanded.

Grim growled. It wasn't a threatening growl, but it sounded like he was saying something with those growls. "I speak Dragonese."

Toothless and Deathshriek stopped and hovered where they were.

Lief looked down at the Belt. "The Ruby has paled and the Emerald has dulled."

"What does that mean?" Hiccup asked.

"It means danger and evil are near," Lief answered. "When this is over, I will tell you about the Belt of Deltora."

There was another roar, this one closer. A gold dragon flew up from the hills in front of them.

"The dragon of the Topaz!" cried Jasmine.

"No, it is not," said Lief. "It is not the dragon of the Topaz." He pressed his hand to the Topaz again.

Hiccup heard Lief gasp and lean against him. "What's wrong?"

Lief panted. "The Topaz dragon; it is hurt."

Hiccup turned to Grim. "We have to find the Topaz dragon before it's too late. If it's hurt, it would go to its nest."

Lief pointed to a specific hill in front of them, not far where the false dragon had taken off from.

"Hiccup, you find the Topaz dragon," said Grim. "Deathshriek and I can take care of this fake."

"You have another rider!" Hiccup quickly said. "I know how you fly, Grim. You can't do it with Jasmine riding with you."

"Let me worry about it. You find that dragon!" Grim snarled determinedly and Deathshriek flew forward.

"Oh, great," muttered Hiccup. "Let's find the Topaz dragon."

Jasmine held on to Grim as Deathshriek flew into battle.

"I need you to hold on as tight as you can, my lady," said Grim.

"Stop calling me that," said Jasmine. "My name is Jasmine, so call me that."

"Jasmine," Grim corrected, "I need you to hold on and if Kree can follow my brother and the king, it would be greatly appreciated. Hiccup is right; we cannot fly as we usually do with an extra rider. Until they find the dragon of the Topaz, our only job is to keep this false dragon occupied."

Kree clucked in understanding and flew from inside Jasmine's jacket.

"All right, Deathshriek, let's show this fake what a real dragon can do," Grim said.

"**You got it, Grim,**" said Deathshriek. He let out the bone-chilling shriek he was named for.

This easily got the false dragon's attention.

Hiccup directed Toothless to the hill Lief had pointed out. At the foot of the hill were drops of blood. Toothless sniffed at the blood and growled, following the trail into a cave with his eyes.

"It is in there," said Lief, seeing the blood as well. "Let me go first. The dragon knows me."

"Be careful," said Hiccup. "An injured dragon can be a violent dragon. We once came across a Scauldron that almost killed us when we were trying to help him."

Lief slowly walked to the cave's mouth. He heard Hiccup following him several steps behind him.

"Fidelis," Hiccup heard Lief call softly. He guessed by the way Lief said it, it was the dragon's true name. He remembered what the Amethyst dragon said about others knowing a dragon's true name.

There was a low, threatening growl from the cave.

Lief put one hand on the Topaz and put out his other hand to the dark. "Fidelis? It is I, Lief."

"Come closer, young king," a deep voice came from inside the cave. "I feel the Topaz giving me strength."

Lief walked into the cave with more confidence, knowing the dragon was aware of his presence and was in its right mind. He could see graying scales mixed with red blood. He reached out and put his hand on the dragon's neck.

The Topaz dragon inhaled deeply at the contact. "You have been around other dragons. I smell one on you. It does not smell like any dragon I have come across in the past."

"Yes," said Lief. "We have met two dragons from other lands. They are not like the dragons of Deltora."

"Is it okay?"

The Topaz dragon opened its golden eyes and turned to the cave entrance. Lief turned as well. Hiccup was standing at the mouth of the cave. Toothless stepped up behind Hiccup. Both dragons growled at each other.

"They are friends," Lief assured the Topaz dragon. "If it were not for them, I would not have known about the false dragons."

"You're not the first Deltoran dragon to be attacked," said Hiccup, stepping closer with Toothless in tow. "Hey, bud, can you give us some light?"

Toothless fired a plasma blast into the ceiling.

The Topaz dragon was cut up and covered in blood. Its scales were dull, but the color was coming back slowly.

Hiccup came to stand next to Lief.

The Topaz dragon gave Hiccup a look over. It looked at his slight frame and prosthetic leg. It watched Hiccup put his hand out to it and look away. It understood that the boy was putting his life in its talons.

"Look at me, boy," said the Topaz dragon.

Hiccup turned to the Topaz dragon. He placed his hand on the dragon's nose. "My name's Hiccup. We've been worried about you. Are you going to be okay?"

"I must rest," said the Topaz dragon. "With the help of the Topaz, I will recover."

"Okay," said Hiccup. He turned to Lief. "Toothless and I have to help the others."

"We will be fine for now," said Lief.

Hiccup nodded. He jumped onto Toothless and they rushed to find Grim and Deathshriek.

Deathshriek was leading the false dragon on a long chase through the clouds. Jasmine was holding on for dear life as Grim steered Deathshriek through sharp banks and steep dives. It was clear Grim and Deathshriek had experience flying together.

Kree began squawking.

"Lief has found the dragon," said Jasmine. "Your brother and his dragon are coming."

Toothless quickly dove around and fired at the false dragon.

"Grim, take Jasmine down to Lief," said Hiccup. "We'll keep the fake dragon busy until you get back."

Grim nodded. "Hold on," he told Jasmine.

Deathshriek whirled around and followed Kree to where Lief and the Topaz dragon were. He landed and Jasmine jumped off.

Grim followed her into the cave. He looked at the amount of blood on the ground.

"Ah, you brought the fair maiden with you, young king."

Jasmine knew the voice and froze where she stood.

There was a humorless chuckle. "I am no threat to you, fair maiden. Who is with you?"

Grim came into the cave enough to see Toothless had provided some light in the form of a plasma blast. It illuminated the pale gold dragon lying a pool of its own blood. He looked at the missing scales and claw marks.

After pausing in shock, Grim took off his black coat and drew his sword. He turned on his heel, leaving the coat and quiver on the ground and walked out to Deathshriek. "***That abomination is going to die!*" he snarled.

Grim got on Deathshriek and urged him to join Hiccup.

Toothless was easily keeping the false dragon busy. It breathed gold fire at them. Toothless would swoop out of the way and hide in the clouds. The false dragon was becoming annoyed.

A blood-curdling shriek was heard and the air around the false dragon's head was displaced. Deathshriek became visible and came around to face the false dragon. Grim was standing up on Deathshriek, his large sword in hand.

"***Charge!*" Grim ordered Deathshriek.

Deathshriek let out a shrieking roar, his white facial markings becoming visible. He flew towards the false dragon and he and Grim both became invisible. Grim reappeared again a second later in the air, his sword pointed down at the false dragon. With a roar, Grim landed on the back of the false dragon and stabbed it in the shoulder. He kept his sword in the false dragon's flesh and ran the length of its back. Grim leapt off the back of the false dragon and free fell. He felt Deathshriek's paws around him and pulled him to his chest. Grim turned invisible again.

The false dragon roared and fell to the earth.

Grim and Deathshriek landed close by.

"***Oh, no,*" said Deathshriek, seeing where the false dragon had landed: right at the mouth of the Topaz dragon's cave. Deathshriek left Grim where he was and attacked the false dragon.

The false dragon and Deathshriek fought, snapping and clawing at each other. But the false dragon was larger than Deathshriek and was able to throw Deathshriek off.

Grim let out a shriek to match Deathshriek's and pounced on the false dragon. He managed to jump onto its head. With his dragon claws, he stabbed and tore through the false dragon, the Gronkle iron tips able to pierce its hide easily.

"**You will not harm another dragon again!**" Grim snarled, continuing to tear into the false dragon. "**You and your kind will never extinguish another fire!**"

Black blood was everywhere. Grim kept on fighting. The false dragon was trying to throw Grim off. It slammed its head to the ground, but Grim's claws were hooked into the side of its face. He continued to stab and slash. The false dragon soon understood Grim was not going to stop. It brought its head up and thrashed. Grim was finally thrown off the false dragon, but not before he had destroyed the right half of its face. With black blood continuing to flow, the false dragon made its escape.

"**Grim.**"

Grim growled and snapped his head around to Deathshriek.

"**It's over, Grim. Calm down.**"

"**Don't tell me to calm down,**" hissed Grim.

Hiccup and Toothless landed. They saw the fight from the air. They had followed Deathshriek's example and stayed out of the fight between the false dragon and Grim.

"Grim?" Hiccup called. "Are you okay?"

Grim turned and stormed off.

"Grim!" Hiccup began to chase after him, but Deathshriek blocked his way. "Get out of the way, Deathshriek."

Deathshriek shook his head and pushed Hiccup back to the cave. "**Let him go, Hiccup. Give him time.**"

Toothless took Deathshriek's place and cooed as he pushed his rider down into the cave to Lief, Jasmine, and the Topaz dragon.

"What happened up there?" Lief asked.

Hiccup found a place to sit that wasn't covered in blood. "Something I hope I never see again."

"And what was that?" Jasmine asked.

Hiccup thought about his words. "Grim got his hands on that false dragon. He used his dragon claws. I don't know if any of the wounds are fatal, but Grim just ripped half that thing's face off. I have never seen him that angry, not even when one of our tribe betrayed us to an enemy tribe."

"Where is he now?" asked Lief.

"I think he went to cool off," said Hiccup. "Deathshriek will keep an eye on him. Let's worry about the dragon who's bleeding right now."

"I am fine," said the Topaz dragon.

"Rest," Lief bid the dragon, running his hand over its jaw.

"Lief's right," said Hiccup. "That's the best thing you can do right now."

They stayed in the cave for the rest of the day and decided to sleep there. Jasmine sent Kree off with a message for Barda telling him what happened. Grim still hadn't come back, but Deathshriek came in before sunset to see how everyone was.

It was an odd sight when Deathshriek and Toothless shared the same idea and began cleaning the blood from the Topaz dragon, careful not to tear open any of the wounds. The Topaz dragon said nothing as he was groomed by the two smaller dragons.

Hiccup was getting worried when Grim still hadn't come back after sunset. He got up from where he was sitting and walked out of the cave.

"Where are you going?" Jasmine asked.

"To find my brother," said Hiccup.

Hiccup barely got five steps when Grim walked into view. "Grim, you're okay! Where have you been?"

"I needed some time to myself," Grim replied softly.

Hiccup looked at the dragon scale clothes Grim wore. They didn't have any of the black blood on them, suggesting Grim had found a place to wash up.

"Deathshriek knew where I was," said Grim. "Have you eaten? I can hunt something for you if you haven't."

"No, we've been keeping tabs on the Topaz dragon," Hiccup replied. He threw his arms around Grim's neck. "I was really worried. You really scared me."

Grim hugged Hiccup back. "I scared myself. I did not know I could do something like that to another creature."

"The others are worried about you," said Hiccup. "Come inside and we'll talk."

"If only to find out what they want to eat," said Grim.

Hiccup and Grim returned to the Topaz dragon's cave.

"You found him," said Jasmine.

"Actually, he was back already," Hiccup said. "Just was hanging out nearby."

"You must be hungry," Grim said. "What would you like to eat? I can hunt something for you." He retrieved his quiver.

"There may not be much to find," said Lief.

"The land is recovering from famine," Grim said. "I am aware of that. But a dragon can find food anywhere if they know where to look." With that, Grim turned and left.

"Is he always like that?" Jasmine asked Hiccup.

Hiccup rubbed the back of his neck. "Yeah. That's my brother for you."

"He is certainly odd," Jasmine commented.

"Jasmine!" Lief scolded.

"No, that's okay," Hiccup quickly reassured. "Grim doesn't conform to the standards of what used to be his tribe. He was banished over a misunderstanding and eventually he found his way to Berk. He ended up rescuing me from a rival tribe and my dad gave him a place to stay in our house. A few weeks later, Dad said he wanted to adopt Grim. It was like having a whole family again. You see, I never knew my mother. She died when I was only a baby. I have no memory of her. For the longest time, it's been me and my dad and we tended not to see eye to eye on a lot of things. Grim came along and gave me someone I could talk to who actually understood what I was talking about."

An hour later, Grim returned with a stag. He butchered it and cooked it before bringing it down to the humans and seeing if the dragons wanted any. The Topaz dragon was hungry and ate the portion he was offered. Grim and Deathshriek also gave their portions to the Topaz dragon, saying that they would go hunting again later.

After eating, they settled down for the night. Grim remained awake, sitting on a rock watching the fire.

"You are a strange human," the Topaz dragon spoke up from where he lay, careful to keep his voice down.

Grim looked up at the dragon. "So I have been told."

There was a moment of silence.

"Why?" the Topaz dragon asked. "Why did you come here? Why did you risk your own life for someone you do not know? Why save me?"

Grim got to his feet and walked over to the Topaz dragon. He offered his hand and the Topaz dragon lowered his head so his nose pressed against Grim's hand. "Because you needed to be saved. Do I need any other reason, Creideamh?"

"Creideamh?" the dragon repeated.

"In a sense, that is your name," Grim said. "Creideamh means 'faith.' You are the dragon of faith, are you not?"

The Topaz dragon pulled his lips back to show his teeth in a smile. "You are very much like a great human I knew long ago."

Grim hummed and gave a small smile. "I do not know if you would want to compare me to him. For all you know, I'm just a little lost boy who likes to sound like he knows what he is doing."

"Have faith," said the Topaz dragon. "I do."

Grim chuckled.

* * *

><p>By all means review. Also, the Irish and Norse words I use in this, I got them off Google. Hopefully they are right. If not, I apologize right now.

I'm trying to get as many projects done as I can. I know I have a few stories that have been sitting on hold for a very long time that need to be finished. They eventually will be finished, it's just a matter of me sitting down and finishing them. To all those who have read some of my other series, let me know what you think of them. You can put your comments in the review box or PM me. I am very curious to see what my readers have been thinking.

4. Chapter 4

And here's the next chapter. I wasn't planning on posting today, but I decided, I probably should and keep my motivation going to get more of this done. I already have more things with this series in the works and hopefully everything will meet everyone's expectations. I did throw some Norse into this chapter. I don't know if it's the correct translation, but this is what I found and blame Google if it's wrong. I do the best I can with my research, not some half-baked job I know some of my former classmates used to do.

* * *

><p>In the morning, they packed up to leave for Del.<p>

"Are you sure you're going to be okay?" Hiccup asked the Topaz dragon.

"Yes," the Topaz dragon replied. "I am strong enough. Your brother wounded the creature greatly. It will not recover as quickly."

The Topaz dragon turned to Grim. "You are a fierce fighter, young human."

"You live with dragons for so long, you learn a few things," Grim said.

Deathshriek huffed. "***More than a few.**"

Lief stepped up. "You know to call out to me if you need help. Del will always be open to you."

"I thank you for the offer, young king," said the Topaz dragon.

"However, your people are not as kind to me."

They left for Del. Their pace was more subdued since they weren't in a race to get somewhere. They had pleasant, informal conversations that related to where they grew up. Hiccup was surprised to know that Lief grew up in a forge and Jasmine was amazed that Grim had lived in the wild with dragons for two years and knew so much about them.

They returned to the palace and landed in the courtyard. They were greeted by the guards who thought they were under attack before Barda came out roaring that they were not the enemy and only the travelers who had brought the king back to his palace.

Barda and the man with the scar, Doom, demanded to know everything that had happened. Lief and Jasmine told them they found the Topaz dragon and a false dragon resembling the Topaz dragon.

"It is wounded now," Grim told them. "The false beast will think twice before coming back for another fight."

Lief ordered that Hiccup, Grim, and their dragons be kept in the palace. They quickly saw a problem when Toothless and Deathshriek refused to leave their riders' sides. It was decided that the dragons would be allowed to sleep in the same chambers as their riders as long as they didn't cause trouble.

Hiccup and Grim made their way to the library with their dragons. They were told by Lief to find Marilen and she would tell them about the Belt of Deltora. They pushed the doors to the library open.

"Wow," breathed Hiccup.

The room was lined with shelves. Marble pillars led up to the arches of the ceiling. The ceiling was painted liked the great hall, but this one depicted a battle. Men and rainbow dragons were fighting the enemy together.

"This is beautiful," said Grim. "They respect these dragons greatly."

They found a young mother and her small baby. The baby was crying and the young mother was trying to quiet him.

Toothless hurried up to them, scaring the mother.

"It's okay!" Hiccup cried. "He's not going to hurt you. He just wants to see what all the fuss is about."

Toothless looked at the baby and cocked his head to the side. The baby looked up at him. Toothless cocked his head to the other side. He ducked his head down and brought it back up quickly with a gummy smile and a bark. The baby started giggling.

Hiccup laughed. "Look at that, you made a new friend."

"Toothless may not like small dragons, but he likes small humans," said Grim. "Especially when they start laughing. Are you Marilen? We were told to see you about information on the Belt of Deltora."

The woman turned to them. "I am Marilen. This is little Josef. You want to know about the Belt of Deltora?"

"Yes, King Lief said he would tell us about it when we helped him find the Topaz dragon, but he is busy now and told us to come to you," Grim answered.

"I can help with that." She gave the dragons a wary look. "They are not going to burn anything, are they?"

"No, they know better," said Grim.

"You already met Toothless," said Hiccup. "My name's Hiccup. This is my brother, Grim, and his dragon, Deathshriek."

"Do not let the name deceive you, my lady," said Grim. "He is very gentle."

Marilen put the baby in a basket. Deathshriek and Toothless lay on either side of the basket, Toothless continuing the game of peek-a-boo using his tail. She pulled an old worn book from one of the shelves. Its light blue cover was beginning to fall apart.

"I have not had the chance to repair this book yet," said Marilen. "Jarred had taken it from the library many years ago and then gave it to King Endon during the exile and King Endon gave it to his son, King Lief. Lief has memorized the book. It is why it is so worn, from all the reading."

"Thank you, Marilen," said Hiccup. "We'll take good care of it."

Hiccup and Grim sat at a table so they could watch their dragons.

"'The Belt of Deltora,'" Hiccup read aloud. "'Its history, its powers, and its magic.'"

With the book between them, they began to read.

"_In ancient days, Deltora was divided into seven tribes. The tribes fought on their borders but otherwise stayed in their own place. Each had a gem from deep within the earth, a talisman with special powers._

"_There came a time when the Enemy from the Shadowlands cast greedy eyes on Deltora. The tribes were divided, and singly none of them could repel the invader, who began to triumph._

"_A hero called Adin rose from the ranks of the people. He was an ordinary man, a blacksmith who made swords and armor and shoes for horses. But he had been blessed with strength, courage, and cleverness._

"_One night, Adin dreamed of a special and splendid belt - seven steel medallions beaten to the thinness of silk and connected together with fine chain. To each medallion was fixed one of the tribal gems._

"_Realizing that the dream had been sent to him for a purpose, Adin worked in secret over many months to create a likeness of the belt he had been shown. Then he traveled around the kingdom to persuade each tribe to allow its talisman to be added to it. _

"_The tribes were at first suspicious and wary, but, one by one, desperate to save their land, they agreed. As each gem became part of the belt, its tribe grew stronger. But the people kept their strength secret, and bided their time._

"_And when at last the belt was complete, Adin fastened it around his waist, and it flashed like the sun. Then all the tribes united behind him to form a great army, and together they drove the Enemy from their land._

"_And so Adin became the first king of the united tribes of Deltora, and he ruled the land long and wisely. But he never forgot that he was a man of the people, and that their trust in him was the source of his power. Neither did he forget that the enemy, though defeated, was not destroyed. He knew that the Enemy is clever and sly, and that to its anger and envy a thousand years is like the blink of an eye. So he wore the belt, always and never let it out of his sight. .
."_

They continued through the list of children and future kings and queens who forgot about the Enemy and the added notes of a man named Josef telling the fall of Deltora and its restoration under King Lief. There was more added by Marilen.

"Read about the Gems themselves," said Grim.

Hiccup flipped through the pages to find the information about the Gems.

Grim pointed to one section. "There. The Topaz."

"Well, we're in Topaz territory, so we might as well start with that one," Hiccup commented.

"_The Topaz, symbol of faithfulness, is a powerful gem, and its strength increases as the moon grows full. The Topaz protects its wearer from the terrors of the night. It has the power to open doors to the spirit world. It strengthens and clears the mind, enabling the wearer to see through pretense and evil magic."_

"'Pretense?'" said Hiccup.

Grim's eyes lit up. "It breaks illusions."

Hiccup shuddered. "The Belt is powerful. We only read about one Gem and that's what it does?" He let out a low whistle.

"Turn to the Amethyst and the Diamond," said Grim. "We met those dragons as well."

Hiccup searched the sections. "Here's the Diamond. I think I saw something on the Amethyst back a few paragraphs."

"Let's read about the Diamond first," said Grim, eager to learn more.

"_The Diamond, symbol of innocence, purity, and strength. Diamonds give courage and strength, protection from pestilence and helps the cause of true love. But take heed of this warning: Diamonds gained by treachery or violence, or desired out of envy or greed, are ill omens, and bring bad fortune. Great evil comes upon those who gain them without honor."_

"You could have used on to ward of that case of eel pox you had," Hiccup joked.

Grim gulped. "I prefer not to think about the curse."

"There's no such thing as curses," Hiccup laughed off. He saw Grim's serious face. "Is there?" he added uncertainly.

"You remember what happened to Dagur, don't you?" Grim asked. "I cursed him before he left Berk with Stoick."

"That was just Alvin getting his revenge," Hiccup said.

"Hiccup, do not joke about this," said Grim. "We saw the magic of the Belt. Those dragons have those powers as well. Be serious."

Hiccup put his hands up. "Okay, I will be." He smirked. "You could have used one for a certain princess."

Grim shoved Hiccup out of his chair.

"Okay, maybe not." Hiccup dusted himself off before sitting back down. "Now where did I see that part about the Amethyst?"

"_The great Amethyst, symbol of truth, calms and soothes. It changes color in the presence of illness, loses color near poisoned food or drink, and guides the wearer towards sincerity, security, and peace of mind."_

Hiccup went to the next page and stopped. It was about the Emerald. "Grim?"

"We have to know," said Grim. "Just because it reminds me of him, does not mean we can skip over it over selfishness."

Hiccup nodded.

"_The Emerald, symbol of honor, dulls in the presence of evil, and when a vow is broken. It is a remedy for sores and ulcers, and an antidote to poison."_

Grim chuckled. "And to think I named a dragon with poisonous spines Emerald."

Hiccup found the entry on the Ruby, whose border they had been close to.

"_The great Ruby, symbol of happiness, red as blood, grows pale in the presence of evil, or when misfortune threatens its wearer. It words off evil spirits, and is an antidote to snake venom."_

Hiccup turned to the entries about the Opal and Lapis Lazuli, whose

entries were next to each other.

"_The Opal, symbol of hope, shines with all the colors of the rainbow. It has the power to give glimpses of the future, and to aid those with weak sight. The Opal has a special relationship with the Lapis Lazuli."_

"_The Lapis Lazuli, the heavenly stone, is the symbol of good fortune, brings good luck and has an affiliation with the Opal."_

"Doesn't really say how they're related to each other," said Hiccup.

Grim thought for a moment. "I guess if you know what is going to happen, you need the good fortune for it to happen the way you see it or find a way to change it."

Hiccup nodded. He could understand that.

* * *

><p>It was later in the day when Grim found the training grounds and was practicing his archery. He had improved since his brief lessons in Scotland. Personally, he felt he was still a better shot with his sling.<p>

Grim sensed someone coming up behind him as he readied to fire another arrow.

"Would you care to share lunch with me, young lord?"

Grim jumped and his arrow flew off course. Luckily for anyone on the other side of the target, if there was anyone, the arrow hit the outer ring. It was not that the person had startled him or the fact that it was the woman he had seen Lief with prior to leaving to help the Topaz dragon since he was aware that someone had been behind him, but her question. Or at least the way she had addressed him.

Grim turned. "What did you call me?"

"I called you 'young lord,'" said the woman. "You are a lord, are you not? You know archery. Only noble blood knows archery."

"Perhaps only noble blood in your lands," said Grim. "We know how to use crossbows on Berk."

"Yes, but you are not using a crossbow," the woman pointed out.

"Crossbows have more power," said Grim. "Longer range, more force to pierce."

The woman nodded.

"You are the king's mother, are you not?" Grim asked.

"Yes, I am Sharn," she replied.

Grim bowed. "Grim Frosti of Berk, my lady."

Sharn smiled softly. "You helped my son. You do not need to be so formal."

Grim only nodded.

"Come," said Sharn. "Let us have lunch and you can tell me where you are from."

Grim put his bow away and went to the kitchen with Sharn. The cook made them a quick meal that was a small bowl of soup, a sweet roll, and cheese.

"What is Berk like?" Sharn asked.

"It is an island far north of here," Grim replied. "It is very cold and snows most of the year, hails the rest of it. This is very warm weather for Hiccup and I."

"I should see if I can find some lighter clothes in your size," said Sharn. "I still have some of Lief's old things packed away. Your brother may be able to fit into them better than you would."

"You do not need to supply me with clothes, my lady," said Grim.

"What did we talk about?" Sharn asked with a scolding look.

"Forgive me. . . Sharn," said Grim. It felt weird to him addressing a noble lady by her first name and not her title.

Sharn smiled. "This is an informal lunch, an informal questioning, so you can just call me by my name. Does everyone on Berk have their own dragon?"

"No," replied Grim. "Dragons are plentiful if you know where to look, but not everyone has taken to training them. Hiccup leads the Dragon Training Academy and the riders. We are the first line of defense against invasion."

"Is invasion a problem?" asked Sharn.

"Not so much now," Grim said. "For three hundred years, Berk's greatest problem was the dragons. Now, thanks to Hiccup, we are living peacefully with them. As for other tribes, we recently had another tribe ally themselves with us and take down a competing tribe after their chief kidnapped ours. It did not end pleasantly for him." Grim could easily picture Dagur locked up in an Outcast prison for what he did to Alvin.

"Sounds exciting," Sharn said. "What do you do on your island? Do you have an apprenticeship?"

"I make clothes from dragon scales," said Grim. "All dragons shed their scales and claws. I take those and turn them into clothes. I trade with merchant who visits the island regularly. Hiccup is also a blacksmith and an inventor."

"Your island must be very rich, indeed," said Sharn.

"Tell me about Deltora," said Grim.

Sharn leaned back in her chair. "Deltora was originally known as the Land of Dragons and the dragons were plentiful. The Land of Dragons was only an island, but one day the sea to the north boiled and up came the land, marrying the Land of Dragons and what is now known as The Shadowlands. When the land stopped changing, each of the seven tribes found a great gem and they became the talismans of the tribes. Later, Adin joined the tribes by collecting the seven talismans and they make up the Belt of Deltora."

"The Great Gems are the seven hearts of the land," said Grim.

"Yes, I suppose they would be," said Sharn.

Grim thought about his dream. He now knew what the seven hearts, seven shadows, and seven fires were, but he had to wonder who was behind all this. From what he knew, magic didn't make decisions itself.

* * *

><p>Hiccup found his way down to the stables. He wasn't used to seeing horses, but he wanted to draw some pictures so he could show the others back home what they looked like. Sure they saw the Scottish princess's horse, but that was from a distance.<p>

Hiccup took out his journal and sat up on the stall and began drawing a chestnut colored horse. He was startled when something bit him in the shoulder.

"Ow!" Hiccup fell off the stall he was sitting on and into a pile of straw. He looked up and saw that the stall he was sitting on wasn't unoccupied. A golden horse with white mane and tail whickered at him. "Very funny."

"I do not think Honey likes you." The small voice belonged to a small boy about Gustav's age. He had dark hair and dark eyes.

"I kinda figured that," Hiccup said, picking himself up and dusting himself off. He retrieved his journal.

"Do you like horses?" the boy asked.

"I don't know," said Hiccup. "We don't have horses on Berk. It's too cold for them."

"Then how do you get around?" the boy asked. "On foot?"

"By ship," Hiccup replied. "Berk is an island. You can walk to most places. We only have one village. If we need to get somewhere in a hurry, we have the dragons."

The boy's dark eyes lit up. "You are one of the two dragon riders!"

"Yep, that's me," Hiccup replied. "Hiccup the dragon rider."

"My name is Zerry," said the boy. "I am the stable assistant."

"Sounds like fun," said Hiccup. "I bet you know a lot about horses."

Zerry nodded. "I bet you know a lot about dragons."

"Well, I don't want to brag," said Hiccup. "I got to see your horses. Do you want to see my dragon?"

Zerry was hesitant. "The last dragon I met threatened to kill me. If it were not for the king, I would be dead. Then again, if I never met the king, I would still be with the Masked Ones and would not have stolen the Belt."

"You stole the Belt of Deltora?" asked Hiccup.

"Picked it right off of King Lief's waist," Zerry said somewhat proudly.

"Remind me to watch out for you," Hiccup said. "I can understand why the dragon would have been angry. Toothless is okay. He won't hurt you."

Hiccup and Zerry went outside and found Toothless basking not too far away.

"Toothless," Hiccup called.

Toothless got up and marched over to Hiccup. He turned to the boy hiding behind Hiccup.

"This is Zerry," said Hiccup. "Say hello, Zerry."

"H-hello," stuttered Zerry.

Toothless sniffed Zerry before licking his face once.

"He likes you," Hiccup said with a smile.

Zerry wiped some of the dragon drool off his face. "He is not so bad."

"Many dragons aren't," said Hiccup. "I'm not so sure about Deltoran dragons, but the dragons in the archipelago where we live are friendly once you get to know them."

A heavy thud alerted them to another dragon.

Zerry yelped and scrambled behind Hiccup again.

Hiccup pushed him back out. "It's just Deathshriek. That's the dragon my brother rides."

Deathshriek lay down where he was and waited for the boy to come to him.

"**Bad experiences with dragons from what I heard,**" Toothless explained.

"**Understandable. But he certainly an adorable thing. Reminds me of

Gustav,**" Deathshriek told Toothless.

"You can go touch him," Hiccup said to Zerry. "Deathshriek's nice. You gotta ignore the scary name. He can be scary in a fight."

Zerry slowly walked over to Deathshriek. Deathshriek watched with gentle eyes as Zerry got closer. When he was close enough, Deathshriek swept his tail around and pulled Zerry closer to him.

"A bond begins and ends with trust," Hiccup told Zerry.

Zerry stared at Deathshriek, too scared to move.

Deathshriek purred and pushed his nose against Zerry's chest.

"See? He likes you, too," said Hiccup.

Zerry rubbed Deathshriek's head and laughed.

* * *

><p>Grim found himself back in the library. He didn't know what he was doing back here since he didn't want to be indoors. A book caught his eyes. It was titled "Secrets of Deltora." Grim pulled it off the shelf and began reading. It was written by someone named Doran the Dragonlover.<p>

Grim smiled and started on the chapter about the creatures of the Topaz Territory.

* * *

><p>"There you are," Hiccup called.<p>

Grim looked up. He was currently on the chapter of the Amethyst Territory.

"What are you reading?" Hiccup asked.

Grim held up the book. "It was written by Doran the Dragonlover. It is a guide to Deltora."

"Can I read it after you?" Hiccup asked.

"Yes," replied Grim. "I'm almost finished with it. Did you need me?"

Hiccup smiled. "It's suppertime."

Grim looked out the window and saw the sun was all but set and how dim the library had become since he began. "So it is."

Hiccup and Grim had dinner with Lief and the others. Toothless and Deathshriek were told they had to eat outside. Both dragons were hardly pleased, but Deathshriek went down to the docks and went fishing for the both of them.

"We are preparing to go to the city of Broome," Lief said. "The other dragons need to be found and informed of what is happening. The Ruby dragon is the closest to Del."

"Can't you get in touch with them through the Belt?" asked Hiccup.
"You did it with the Topaz dragon."

"I can, but I wish to do it face to face," said Lief.

"Lief, you cannot go gallivanting off around Deltora again," said Sharn. "You are needed here."

"We can take Toothless and Deathshriek," said Hiccup. "We'll be around Deltora before you know it."

Lief shook his head. "The dragons will sense them invading their lands and attack. The Amethyst dragon and Diamond dragon had to worry about the false dragons and the Topaz dragon was already injured. It is a miracle you have not been attacked by them."

"I'm not leaving Toothless behind," Hiccup told them.

"We won't be," Grim assured Hiccup. "The Topaz dragon already knows we are here. Could we not get as close to the Ruby border as possible and have Toothless and Deathshriek wait there? After you meet with the Ruby dragon, we can call Toothless and Deathshriek to us."

"Broome is still far from where the border of the Topaz and Ruby is," said Barda.

"If I call loud enough, Deathshriek will hear me," said Grim.

Hiccup nodded. "Toothless has good hearing. He's always been able to find me."

"There are only two dragons," said Barda. "I will not be left behind again."

"Can the dragons follow us?" Lief asked them.

"Deathshriek can, easily," said Grim.

"Toothless needs rider to work his tailfin," Hiccup said. "If there's a forge nearby, I can rework the mechanism so he can work it independently."

"There is a forge you can use," said Sharn. "It is Adin's forge and it has sat empty for a couple years, but it is in good repair."

"After we warn the Ruby dragon, we will go to the Plains and seek the Opal dragon," Lief continued. "Then to the Mere and then to Dread Mountain."

"We should see the Amethyst and Diamond dragons," said Grim. "The Amethyst dragon was injured. I want to see how he is healing."

"So if we're not taking the dragons, how are we getting there?" Hiccup asked. "Walking?"

"We will take horses," Barda said, like Hiccup was a small child.

"That's great for you, but some of us don't know how to ride," Hiccup pointed out.

"It is not very hard," Jasmine said. "I had to learn not long ago."

Grim reached over and put his hand on Hiccup's shoulder. "I know how to ride. I'll teach you."

Hiccup gave one of his nervous smiles. "No offense, Grim, but you haven't been on a horse in a while."

"It's like flying," Grim said. "You never forget."

* * *

><p>"I hate this," Hiccup said.<p>

The morning brought a problem that Grim hadn't thought of. Hiccup's prosthetic would not fit in the stirrup and he risked hurting the horse he was riding when he gave it a kick to go.

"I'm sorry," Grim said. "I did not think of this."

"It's not your fault," said Hiccup. "How could've you known? Maybe I should just work on Toothless' tailfin."

"You do that," said Grim. "I will come up with something."

Hiccup nodded and went to the forge.

Toothless curled up outside of the forge while Hiccup worked. Hiccup had taken off his tailfin and saddle to work on its modifications.

Toothless perked up his ear fins and lifted his head. He growled a warning. It was the man with the scar, Doom.

Hiccup heard Toothless growl and looked up from what he was doing.

"What are you working on?" Doom asked.

"A special tailfin for Toothless," Hiccup replied. "I have to make it so he can operate it himself when I'm not around."

Doom came closer to inspect the work.

Toothless growled more, getting up to pounce on Doom.

"Easy, bud," Hiccup said. "He doesn't like you," he said to Doom.

"I can tell," Doom said, moving around Toothless to get a better look at what Hiccup was doing. "What are you exactly trying to make?"

Hiccup showed Doom the quick drawing he made with his measurements. "I made one similar before. I know it can be done like this. I need to make the gears, but I haven't made a way switch it from my pedal

to independent mode."

"You will need some sort of lever to engage the tailfin," said Doom.

"I know, but I don't know how to connect it," Hiccup said.

The two of them began brainstorming ideas for Toothless' new tailfin.

* * *

><p>Grim was looking at a map of Deltora. To get to their first destination, Broome, they would take The Coast Road northeast. If they could not find the Ruby dragon, they would go to Raladin by cutting through the Forest of Silence's End Wood, the safest of the three sections of forest. Grim hoped that they would not have to do such a thing. He knew it wasn't going to be an easy task to call for their dragons if they were in Broome and Toothless and Deathshriek were at the border.<p>

Grim assured himself that it could be done. Toothless' hearing was excellent. He wasn't sure what condition his voice would be in afterwards.

There was a soft knock. Lief was standing in the doorway.

"Your highness," Grim said with a bow of his head.

"I thought I would find you in here," said Lief. He saw the map Grim was looking at. "I see you are becoming acquainted with Deltora's geography."

"As well as its lore," Grim added. "I read about Doran the Dragonlover."

Lief gave a small fond smile. "Deltora's greatest explorer and a friend to dragons. The dragons call him Dragonfriend. He was said to be a man of the people with no affiliation to a single tribe."

"I understand dragons can sense a person born in their territory," Grim said. "And foreigners are able to be drawn to a dragon tribe."

"Doran wrote it, but no one truly knows," Lief admitted. "We only began having ships come to our ports from other lands in the past months. Before then, the people feared the dragons."

"I do not blame them," said Grim. "People fear what they do not understand. It was like that on Berk until not long ago. We are at peace with dragons now and they live among us."

"If only it could be true in Deltora," said Lief.

"It can be," Grim said. "You are king here. You have more power over these people than Hiccup and I do. They will listen to you."

Lief smiled at the thought about the people and dragons living in peace.

Grim turned back to the map. "I am mapping our route. We will not be able to get everywhere on the dragons. After Broome, where are we going next?"

"If we find the Ruby dragon, we will stop in Raladin," said Lief. "They are friends and I wish to inform them of the situation. Afterwards, we will stop in D'Or before we cross into the Opal territory. I hope we will run into a friend on his travels."

"A trader?" asked Grim.

Lief nodded. "He was part of the Resistance during the time of the Shadowlord and he and his brother helped fight against him in the last battle. He is an old friend of Doom's."

Grim hummed. "Most do not argue with traders. We have used the help of ours to get us out of situations."

"After we find the Opal dragon, we will move on to the Mere," Lief said. "The Lapis Lazuli dragon has its den in The Funnel near the Lapis Lazuli-Emerald border. We will need to send Kree to the Dread Gnomes before we try to climb Dread Mountain."

"I take it the Dread Gnomes are not fond of visitors," Grim said.

"They are very wary of outsiders," Lief said.

Grim nodded.

"How long do you think it will take for Hiccup to make the tailfin for Toothless?" Lief asked. "We need to leave as soon as possible."

"Understood," said Grim. "Toothless' tailfin was damaged when we were caught in the storm that brought us here. Hiccup could not fix it so it was reliable with what we had. He will need to make a completely new tailfin. If Hiccup works all night, it shouldn't take him more than a couple days. He has done something similar to this before."

"We cannot wait long," said Lief.

"If you believe it will take too much time, I can go with you and Hiccup and Toothless can catch up to us when the tailfin is complete," Grim suggested.

"No, I want all of us to stay together," Lief said.

* * *

><p>Several hours later, Hiccup completed the new tailfin with the help of Doom. He attached it to Toothless' tail. Toothless grumbled.<p>

"I know, bud, you hate this," said Hiccup.

Toothless grumbled in agreement and nodded firmly.

Doom only watched the exchange between the two.

"Okay," said Hiccup. "The only thing we need to do yet is test it. If we're lucky, we can be on our way to Broome tomorrow."

"And how are you going to test it?" asked Doom.

"By flying of course," said Hiccup. "We'll fly around Del and come back."

Hiccup jumped on to Toothless' back. "We shouldn't be too long."

Toothless didn't wait for Hiccup to say something else and launched them into the sky. He could feel Hiccup working the prosthetic at the moment as they flew high and around the city.

"You ready, bud?" asked Hiccup.

"**If you must,**" said Toothless.

Hiccup had rigged the new saddle with a lever. He pulled it, sliding the mechanism that controlled the prosthetic by Hiccup's foot pedal to the gears that controlled the prosthetic by Toothless' good tailfin.

"Tailfin?" Hiccup asked, turning around.

Toothless flexed his tailfin and the prosthetic mimicked the movement.

"Okay, bud, go for it," Hiccup urged.

Toothless banked to the ocean. He dove down and snatched a fish out of the water.

"Hungry, bud?" Hiccup asked.

Toothless swallowed the fish. He let out a series of warbles. He made a swallowing sound.

Hiccup frowned. "What?"

Toothless shook his head.

"Food?" Hiccup guessed.

Toothless barked the affirmative.

"Deathshriek can get his own fish," Hiccup said. "Unless you want to pay him back for earlier."

Toothless shook his head. He wasn't sure how to get across what he was saying without Grim to translate.

"Or are you thinking about taking fish to the Topaz dragon?" Hiccup tried.

Toothless let out a cheer and a laugh.

Hiccup rubbed Toothless' head. "That's a great idea, bud. We can test

your new tailfin under more rigorous conditions."

Hiccup managed to find a large basket to hold their catch and Toothless proceeded to fill the basket with tasty fish.

"Now all we have to do is take this to the Topaz dragon," said Hiccup.

Hiccup secured the basket and they flew off to Os-Mine Hills.

They easily found the Topaz dragon's lair. Toothless landed and poked his head down the hole and called to the Topaz dragon.

"You have returned?" the Topaz dragon called, moving to see who was at his lair.

"And come with lunch!" Hiccup called, hauling the basket behind him. "It's probably not enough if you're really hungry, but every little bit helps."

The Topaz dragon eyed the basket. "You brought food? Do you not think I am able to hunt for myself?" He was a bit offended.

Toothless growled before Hiccup could answer. "***It was my idea. It saves you the trouble of hunting while you heal. I don't know how you Deltora dragons do it, but dragons where we're from look out for each other.**"

Hiccup could see Toothless knew what he was doing and decided not to say anything.

The Topaz dragon tipped the basket over and ate the fish he was given.

Hiccup took the time to observe how his injuries were healing. They were closed and scales were ready to cover them. "You're healing quickly. I remember Toothless taking a spine from a Whispering Death and it was only a little stiff later that evening."

The Topaz dragon lifted his head from his fish. "Do you mind? I am eating."

"Oh, sorry," Hiccup said. He was quiet until the Topaz dragon finished his meal.

The Topaz dragon put the lid back on the basket when he was finished with his talons. "Thank you for the fish, boy."

"It's Hiccup. My name is Hiccup."

"You are giving me power over you. . . Hiccup," said the Topaz dragon.

"No worries there," said Hiccup. "Hiccup's not so much a name as it is an insult. I've always been small and not much of a Viking, but I'm smart and came up with all sorts of inventions. Eventually I got over being a 'useless fishbone' and now I'm the head of the Dragon Academy of Berk. Quite a step up in my opinion."

"I would certainly say so," said the Topaz dragon. "Is this the only

reason you came to Os-Mine? To bring me food?"

"We had to test Toothless' new tailfin," Hiccup replied.

Toothless held his tail up to show it off, but he wasn't as proud of it as his other tailfins.

The Topaz dragon examined the tailfin. "You do not appear pleased with it."

"**Hiccup has been my left tailfin since I lost it when I was shot down,**" said Toothless. "**It doesn't feel right without him on my back.**"

"Ah, you have bonded," said the Topaz dragon.

"We're inseparable," Hiccup said, batting playfully at Toothless' head.

"**You bet we are!**" agreed Toothless.

The Topaz dragon hummed, a bass sound that reverberated around the cave. "Would help any dragon in need?"

"We do it all the time," replied Hiccup. "Why?"

"You remind me of someone I knew a long time ago," the Topaz dragon said. "You and your brother. I have told your brother such. I am certain Dragonfriend would have loved you both if he were still alive."

Hiccup smiled. "Did you just ask that to see if I'm like Dragonfriend?"

The Topaz dragon snorted. "Hardly. I said you reminded me of him. I did not say you were like him."

"I'll help any dragon in need," Hiccup said earnestly. "Even before I knew what they were really like, I helped Toothless. I didn't think about helping you, only about what I had to do to help. Is it that hard to think a human would help you, Tru?"

"It is," replied the Topaz dragon. "Humans do not often seek out our company or our friendship." He frowned. "Tru?"

"It's 'faith' in Norse," replied Hiccup.

"Your brother called me Creideamh," the Topaz dragon told him. "He said it also means 'faith'."

"I wish he would speak Irish more often," Hiccup said. "It's nice to listen to."

"Then how do you say truth in Norse?" asked the Topaz dragon.

"Sannindi," Hiccup replied.

The Topaz dragon hummed again. "You best return to your brother. He will worry if you are gone too long."

"Yeah," said Hiccup. "I'll see you later, Tru!"

* * *

><p>And how are we liking things? I've had a few reviews, but I need to hear from you to see how good of a job I'm doing. Is this series going to be worth more installments in the future and what would you like to see? I'm taking everything into account and am trying to make this my biggest series since Light and Shadow in the Code: LYOKO section.

5. Chapter 5

**Oh, yes, it's been awhile since I updated this. I was hoping to have the story almost completely finished, but I had a minor set back with my computer and lost my climatic battle. Now I have to do it over again. Hopefully, this will be done at the end of the summer and we can continue on with the series. I have big plans for this series and I want them to come to fruition. Maybe by Christmas the next installment will be finished. Don't hold me to it, but it's a big maybe. Also the song I use at the end of this chapter may have a few screwed up lyrics. It was a bugger to find the Irish lyrics and they are probably spelled incorrectly at times. I was listening to Celtic Woman when I got the idea. **

* * *

><p>With Toothless' new tailfin working perfectly, they were able to leave the next morning for Broome.<p>

They were taking The Coast Road, a safe road they would have few problems with. Lief, Barda, and Jasmine rode Honey, Bella, and Swift respectively while Grim rode a large black stallion named Shadow. Hiccup, until they reached the border, would ride Toothless and then ride with his brother. His prosthetic was too much of a problem to be given his own horse. If Hiccup had prior knowledge of riding, he may have been able to come up with something. Grim was fine with Hiccup riding with him. It was the reason why the stable master had given Grim Shadow.

They took The Coast Road, Hiccup riding Toothless in loops in the sky. Deathshriek followed behind them, enjoying the freedom while he could.

"Your brother seems to be enjoying himself," Barda said to Grim.

Grim turned to look at Barda. "I thought all of you have ridden a dragon before."

"We have," said Barda.

Grim frowned. "And you did not find the joy in it?"

"I find no joy in the sickening feeling when landing," Barda admitted.

"Never ride Toothless," said Grim. "When he learns that, he will

execute as many dives and rolls as he possibly can before he tires of Hiccup yelling at him. I cannot guarantee Deathshriek not doing the same."

Barda faced forward and patted Bella's neck.

It would take them a few days to reach Broome at their current pace. They saved the rations as Toothless and Deathshriek fished for them. Nothing bothered them on their journey, but that could have been because of the dragons travelling with them. Once they saw the Topaz dragon fishing for himself and brought them some of his catch as a token of friendship as Hiccup and Toothless had provided him with food when he was injured.

"**Thank you, cousin, for sharing your catch,**" Grim said. It was a traditional saying of gratuity he was taught from the dragons of Grim Island.

Lief, Barda, and Jasmine were disgusted when Grim took part of the large fish the Topaz dragon brought and ate it raw. The Topaz dragon was surprised at Grim's manners. Apparently, it wasn't only the dragons on Grim Island that had such a saying or it could have been the Topaz dragon was surprised that Grim had said it in Dragonese.

They crossed the border not long after. Hiccup sat behind Grim on Shadow while Toothless and Deathshriek were left behind.

"Dad's probably worried about us," said Hiccup. "It's been a week. We were supposed to be back on Berk."

Grim nodded.

"You never told us anything about your family," Lief said.

"We live with our dad," said Hiccup. "His name is Stoick the Vast. He's the chief of Berk."

"You are royalty?" asked Jasmine.

"I wouldn't call being a chief's son royalty." Hiccup sent a knowing look at Grim. "My dad adopted Grim almost a year ago. It's been us and our dragons since."

"And your mother?" asked Lief.

"She died when I was a baby," Hiccup replied.

Lief turned to Grim. "And what about your family? What happened to them?"

Grim pressed his lips together. "It is not about what happened to them. It is what happened to me. I was banished."

"Why?" Jasmine asked, suspiciously.

"Because of a dragon," Grim replied with an air of finality.

Jasmine opened her mouth to say something else.

"We don't talk about it," Hiccup quickly told her.

Barda decided to change the subject. "We should send Kree ahead to tell Lindal we will soon be arriving. We do not want to arrive in Broome unannounced."

Lief took some paper and a small pencil from his pack and wrote a quick letter for Kree to take to Broome.

"Who's Lindal?" Hiccup asked.

"A friend to us," said Lief. "We know her through Doom."

"She is the chief?" asked Grim.

"No, a great warrior," replied Barda with admiration in his voice.

Grim and Hiccup looked at each other with knowing looks. This woman was more than a friend to Barda.

A few days later, the city of Broome was in sight. It was a walled city with white towers. There were flags raised in welcome.

"It's impressive," said Hiccup. "Del's impressive, too, don't get me wrong. We don't have buildings like this back home, unless you count the great hall and that's built into the rock of the cliffs."

There was a loud roar that startled them all. Kree squawked a warning.

"Beware!" screamed Jasmine.

They looked up and saw a flash of red.

Lief put his hand over the Ruby.

They could barely make the faint outline of the Ruby dragon as it flew overhead. The wind from its wings beat down on them. The horses were spooked and Shadow reared up. Hiccup yelled and gripped Grim's waist to stay on. He felt something splash on his arm.

"Hiccup!" Grim called over his shoulder.

"I'm okay," Hiccup assured him. He looked at what had splashed on his arm. It looked brown against his green shirt sleeve. He pulled his fingers away and found them red and sticky. "Grim."

Grim turned and saw his brother's fingers covered in blood.

"It's not mine!" Hiccup quickly said.

"Where did it come from?" Barda asked.

Lief, Hiccup, and Grim looked up at the sky.

"It is injured," said Lief.

"We need to get it calm and on the ground," said Hiccup. "Lief, can you do that?"

Lief was still resting his hand on the Ruby.

The dragon turned around and crashed landed on its side nearby. Its red scales were dull and its eyes were closed.

"Oh, no," breathed Jasmine.

Hiccup scrambled down from Shadow's back and ran over with Lief to the downed dragon.

"Lief, wait!" called Barda.

Grim threw the reins of Shadow to Barda and followed Lief and Hiccup.

Lief slowed to a stop, Hiccup following his example. Lief kept his hand on the Ruby and with his other hand, he reached out to the dragon.

"Stay back, Hiccup," Lief ordered softly.

Hiccup nodded. "Just be careful. An injured dragon is often the most violent."

"The dragon of the Ruby will not harm me," Lief assured. He began to slowly step forward.

Grim caught up to them and stayed back with Hiccup and watched Lief approach the dragon.

"Greetings, young king," the Ruby dragon whispered. "I am glad to see you again. I do wish it was under better circumstances."

"Female," Grim whispered to Hiccup.

"It's amazing how you know this just by looking," Hiccup muttered back.

"I can hear it," Grim explained.

Barda and Jasmine joined them, standing back with Hiccup and Grim.

The Ruby dragon turned her eyes to the others. "You have brought companions. Two I recognize, but two I do not. They are not from my territory."

"They are not of Deltora." Lief motioned Hiccup and Grim over.

Hiccup went first, laying down the thin sword he carried with him, but Grim stayed and removed his quiver and sword from his back.

"Hello," Hiccup greeted with a smile.

The Ruby dragon nodded her head slightly. She put it down and groaned.

Grim careful approached her, crouching low like he would with any other wounded dragon to show he was not a threat. "What hurts, Lady Ruby?" he asked gently.

Her eyes flicked to him. "Flattery will not get you far."

"But it will get me somewhere," Grim said. "What hurts?"

"I was attacked. My back is wounded. I fear there is infection," the Ruby dragon replied.

"We will need to see how bad the wound is," said Lief.

It was Jasmine and Grim who inspected the wound. It was a long gash that was still bleeding. The scales around the wound were fiery red while the rest of her scales were paling.

"What is that?" Jasmine asked. She poked the skin around the wound and saw something inside the wound.

Grim took a closer look.

"What do you see?" Barda called up.

"There's something in her wound," Grim answered.

"Can you get it out?" asked Hiccup.

Grim and Jasmine exchanged looks, coming to the same conclusion.

"We cannot, not without the proper medicine," said Jasmine. "The dragon has lost enough blood as it is. I do not have enough medicine with me. There is sure to more in Broome."

"Barda, go with Jasmine to Broome and get what is needed," Lief said.

"I'll go as well," said Grim. "Hiccup."

"I'll be okay with Lief," Hiccup told him.

Grim and Jasmine jumped down from the dragon and got on their horses. Barda led the way as they galloped the rest of the way to Broome.

"The people of Broome would have seen us by now," said Lief. "It will not be long until they return. Hopefully, Jasmine will find what she needs in a hurry."

"If she can't find it, Grim will," Hiccup said. He stood by the Ruby dragon's head and scratched at her jaw. He smiled. "It'll be okay."

Lief continued to keep his hand on the Ruby dragon. "You were attacked. By what?"

"It was like the false dragon the Sister of the East used," the Ruby dragon replied.

"Just like the others," Hiccup said.

The Ruby dragon looked at Hiccup. "Others were attacked?"

"The dragons of the Amethyst, Diamond, and Topaz," Lief said. "The dragon of the Topaz was injured greatly. He is doing well. The false dragon was not expecting the Topaz dragon to receive help from other dragons and their riders."

"Other dragons? Riders?" asked the Ruby dragon.

"Hiccup and his brother come from the far north where people and dragons live together," Lief said.

"I was the first Viking to ride a dragon," said Hiccup. "Our dragons are how we got to Deltora."

"You brought other dragons here?" asked the Ruby dragon. "And the other Deltoran dragons have not attacked them?"

"They were occupied with staying in one piece," Hiccup said.

"Where are they now?" asked the Ruby dragon.

"We told them to stay at the Topaz border until we told you about them," said Lief. "The riders have some way of calling them if they need to."

"Grim can, I can't," said Hiccup. He was still scratching at her jaw. He found the sweet spot and the Ruby dragon rolled her head over more into his hand. "Whoa!" Hiccup laughed.

Lief let out a yell of alarm.

"She's fine," Hiccup assured. "Must have found her sweet spot."

Lief blinked at Hiccup.

"Most dragons have it," said Hiccup. "It's usually at their jaw or their chin. It's like finding that spot on a dog."

"Ah," Lief said in understanding.

Hiccup looked at the scales of the Ruby dragon. "She looks better."

"It is the Belt," said Lief. "I will feel better once the others return with the medicine."

Hiccup nodded.

* * *

><p>Grim's expression was reflecting his name as he rode behind Barda and Jasmine. He glanced at Jasmine. He was having a hard time seeing her face because Filli decided to sit on her shoulder facing Grim.<p>

They quickly reached the city gate. Barda wasted no time in demanding entry and telling the guards the king was in need.

One of the people at the gate was a tall woman. She had her head shaved and painted with red swirls. Anyone could see she was a warrior and not because of the spear she held in her hand.

"Where is King Lief?" she demanded.

"He is with the dragon," Barda replied. "It is injured."

"She," corrected Grim.

They turned to him.

"The Ruby dragon is female," Grim pointed out. "Address her as such."

"She is injured," Barda said. "The wound is severe enough that medicine is required."

"How are you going to treat a dragon?" the woman asked.

"Lindal, there is a piece of something in her wound," Jasmine snapped. "If we take it out, she could bleed to death, even with the Belt's aid. I know exactly what I need. I have most of it, but not enough to treat a dragon."

The woman, Lindal, nodded. "What exactly do you need?"

Jasmine was able to get everything she needed from a healer's house. Grim assisted her, pointing out things he knew would work, but mostly learning from Jasmine what most of the things were.

"Who is the boy?" Lindal asked Barda as they watched them get the supplies.

"A dragon rider from the far north," Barda replied.

"The north?" Lindal repeated.

Barda nodded. "Beyond the Shadowlands."

"And Lief trusts him?"

"Yes. They already saved three of the Deltoran dragons," answered Barda.

"They?" Lindal asked.

"He and his brother," said Barda. "His brother is with Lief, helping with the dragon."

Jasmine and Grim returned to Barda.

"We have everything," said Jasmine.

"I will go with you," said Lindal. "I will feel better if you have someone in case the beast turns on you."

Grim whirled and hissed. "The only 'beast' you need to worry about is me. If you harm that dragon, I will not hesitate to attack." He continued on his way out to the waiting horses.

* * *

><p>The Ruby dragon came to a few minutes after Hiccup gave her a good scratching.<p>

"Hey, there," Hiccup greeted. "Feeling better?"

"Yes," replied the Ruby dragon. "I would like whatever is in my wound removed."

Lief turned to Broome. He saw a group of horses riding towards them. "Here they come."

Grim and Jasmine arrived first with Barda and Lindal behind them. Grim and Jasmine wasted no time getting out their supplies and climbing up the Ruby dragon's back. The wound was already closing thanks to the dragon being around the Belt.

"Ready?" asked Grim.

Jasmine nodded.

Hiccup and Lief stood on either side of the Ruby dragon's head.

"It's okay," Hiccup said, putting his hand on the dragon's snout. "It's okay, Angan."

"Angan?" Lief said.

"It's 'happiness' in Norse," said Hiccup. He gave a small shrug. "Sounds a bit harsh, but that's Vikings for you. Grim probably has a better word."

"Ã•thas." Grim didn't say anything else while he was carefully reaching into the gash with his bare hands to get out what was in the wound.

"Hold completely still," Jasmine ordered the dragon. "Grim is about to remove it."

"I'm touching it now," Grim said.

"On three?" Hiccup called up.

"One. Two. Three." Grim pulled and the piece of debris out.

The Ruby dragon roared in pain.

"It's out!" yelled Grim over the roar.

"What is it?" Jasmine asked.

Grim took a careful look at it. "It is a claw." A black claw the size of the Ruby dragon's own claws was in Grim's hands. He hissed. "***Part of the spawn of evil. It needs to be burned.**" He threw it away.

Jasmine hurried to stop the bleeding and bind the wound to the best

of her ability.

Lief ran his hand over the Ruby dragon's jaw. Her scales were quickly turning scarlet now that the claw was out and Jasmine had closed the wound.

Jasmine and Grim jumped down from the Ruby dragon.

"Done?" asked Hiccup.

"Yes," replied Grim.

"We will need to check the wound in a few hours," said Jasmine. "Only to be certain it is healing properly."

"Thank you," said the Ruby dragon.

Lief turned to Lindal. "Good to see you again, Lindal."

"You as well, your highness," said Lindal. She was still eying Grim warily.

Grim returned it with a glare.

Hiccup decided it was probably best to put himself between the two.

"What happened between you two?" Hiccup asked Grim quietly.

"She is not very fond of dragons," said Grim.

"More than that," said Hiccup. "You're ready to pounce."

"She called her a beast," growled Grim. "Acted like she would attack us when we tried to help."

"Not taking sides, but something like that did happen with Scauldy," Hiccup pointed out.

Grim gave him a glare, but it wasn't as strong as the one he gave to Lindal. He knew Hiccup was right and Hiccup could see he knew.

Lindal turned her attention to Hiccup. "You must be the brother."

"Yes," said Hiccup. "My name's Hiccup."

Lindal walked over him and sized him up. She reached out and ruffled his hair. "You certainly do not appear to be a threat. I do not see you riding dragons. Your brother, on the other hand, looks like he lives with them."

"Well, he did at one point," said Hiccup with a shrug.

Grim smirked.

"We should return to the city," said Lindal. "The sun will soon set."

Grim and Hiccup turned to the dragon.

"Is she going to be okay?" Hiccup asked Grim.

"I will be fine," the Ruby dragon assured them.

"Come," said Lindal. "We are prepared for your arrival. There will be a feast tonight."

The Ruby dragon turned to Hiccup and Grim. "If you wish to call your dragon friends, I will not mind meeting them."

Hiccup grinned. "I think Toothless will like you."

"Deathshriek, too," Grim added quietly.

"I look forward to it," said the Ruby dragon.

* * *

><p>Broome was certainly a place Hiccup and Grim hadn't encountered before. Now that they weren't in a rush, Grim could study it better and Hiccup had his first impressions.<p>

"This is different," said Hiccup. "I don't think I've ever seen so much color in one place."

Men and women wore very colorful clothing. Some of them wore a solid color while others wore clothes that looked to be dipped dyed or had the dye splattered on it.

"Really?" asked Lindal.

"Maybe with some of the dragons on Grim Island, but not in our village," said Hiccup. "Vikings aren't known for bright colors."

After stabling their horses, they were taken to the feast hall, or what Lindal called the dance hall. They were greeted warmly by the people of Broome and were sent to sit at the high table. The tables were laden with rich dishes of fish and venison.

"The hunters had a good hunt today," said Lindal. "They managed to find a large Painted Plain deer."

Hiccup and Grim decided to try a little of everything.

The dancing started not too long after.

Grim kept glancing up and seeing some girls wanting to come up to their table, but staying back. "I think we may be asked to dance," he told Hiccup.

"Uh, not the best idea," said Hiccup, looking down at his prosthetic.

"Why not?" Lindal asked, overhearing them.

Hiccup turned and raised his left leg so Lindal could see.

"They will forgive you if you choose not to," said Lindal. "It is bad manners to decline, but if they are a known invalid, it is overlooked. Your brother has no excuse though."

"Grim can dance," said Hiccup.

Grim shot a light glare in Hiccup's direction.

"What? You can," Hiccup defended. "You also promised me to teach me some of the dragon dances."

"We haven't had the time between everything that has happened," said Grim.

"When we get back to Berk, or if we ever get to Scotland, you are teaching me," said Hiccup.

"Of course, brother," Grim soothed.

Hiccup leaned over and nudged Grim. "Maybe you should make the first move."

"Maybe you should be quiet," said Grim. "There are a few looking in your direction. I could throw you to the proverbial wolves."

Grim started to get up to leave the table when a roar shook the building. He and Hiccup jumped up and ran out of the dance hall.

The dark sky became of a sea of red flames.

"The dragon is attacking!" someone screamed.

Lief, Jasmine, Barda, and Lindal rushed out as well.

"The dragon is attacking!" Lindal yelled in outrage. "After all we did for it."

"Her," Hiccup said automatically. "But that's not the same dragon."

"How can that be?" Lindal asked. "There is only one Ruby dragon left in Deltora."

"It's not a dragon," said Grim. "It is a shadow."

Lief looked down at the Belt. The Ruby was pale pink and the Emerald was dulled. He put his hand over the Ruby.

Grim whirled around to Lief. "Can she fight?"

Lief's eyes snapped up to Grim's.

"A•thas, can she fight?" Grim asked again.

Jasmine turned to Grim. "Are you mad? We treated her wounds only hours ago and you want to know if she can fight?"

"Okay, calm down," said Hiccup, not that calm himself. "Can she at least fly?"

Lief focused on his connection to the Ruby dragon through the Ruby in the Belt. "She can fly and she will fight."

"She is in no condition to fight," argued Jasmine.

"We really don't have a choice about this," said Hiccup. "Not until our dragons get here."

"And where are your dragons?" asked Lindal.

"Waiting to be called," said Hiccup. "Grim." He looked, but saw Grim had already disappeared. He saw his brother climb onto a roof.

Grim stood up on the roof and saw the scarlet dragon swoop across the water. If it hadn't seen the Ruby dragon yet, it was a blessing. Grim turned to the south and cupped his hands to his mouth. As he took a deep breath, he prayed the dragons would be able to hear him.

"**Help!**"

All of Broome heard the bone-chilling, heart-breaking shriek.

"What was that?" Lindal asked.

"That's my brother," Hiccup said proudly. "Now we have to hold on until Toothless and Deathshriek get here."

"And how are we going to do that?" asked Barda.

There was another roar and the Ruby dragon flew over the city.

"**Ã•thas, down here!**" Grim called. He reached up to her.

The Ruby dragon lowered her talons down. Grim leapt up and grabbed on. He climbed up her foreleg and onto her neck.

"I am beginning to like that name," she commented. "And I did not know you spoke dragon."

Grim spotted the scarlet dragon. "We need to buy time until the others get here."

"Others? The ones you called?"

"Toothless and Deathshriek," Grim said with a nod. "They're fast flyers and strong fighters."

"I hope they are strong enough," said the Ruby dragon.

"How is your wound?" Grim asked.

"It is well enough," said the Ruby dragon.

Grim looked at the closed wound. If she aggravated it, it would open again. "Ã•thas, I need to ask something of you."

"Can it wait?" she asked, seeing the scarlet dragon flying towards them.

"Do you trust me?" Grim asked.

The people below watched the Ruby dragon climb into the air.

Lief put his hand on the Ruby. "What are you doing?"

"The boy has a plan, young king," replied the Ruby dragon.

The Ruby dragon flipped up and around. When she did, Grim, invisible, jumped off the Ruby dragon's back and landed on the scarlet dragon. He extended his dragon claws and anchored himself to the scarlet dragon's back and began slashing with the other hand. The scales were tougher and the scarlet dragon didn't feel anything at first. Grim managed to remove several scales and punctured its hide. Black blood welled up from the wound and the scarlet dragon roared in pain.

"Grim, are you crazy?" cried Hiccup.

"What is he doing?" Barda asked.

"I'm pretty sure when Angan flipped over, Grim jumped onto the scarlet dragon," said Hiccup.

"How do you know?" asked Jasmine.

"Just a hunch," said Hiccup.

There was a piercing shriek.

"And by that sound," Hiccup added.

Grim was trying to get some sort of control over the scarlet dragon. He wanted to steer it outside of the city. With a shriek, he climbed up its neck and grabbed it by the horns and pulled. The dragon roared and banked hard. It also shot a blast of fire, missing the city walls by feet.

They flew out of the city. Now that the city was behind them, Grim resumed his assault on the scarlet dragon. He worked through its scales until he reached hide and began cutting into it. There was more black blood.

"You are a false dragon," he snarled. "You and the others have tried killing the true dragons. No more!" Grim stabbed his claws into the exposed flesh.

The false dragon roared and tried to shake Grim off, but Grim knew how to hold on.

Lief, Barda, Jasmine, and Hiccup ran out of the city to try to keep track of where Grim and the dragons were.

The Ruby dragon landed outside the city. "Come, quickly," she said. "I do not know how long the boy can keep the beast distracted alone."

The Ruby dragon was large enough that she could hold the four of them. It would not have worked if Hiccup had been any bigger. They

flew off after Grim and the false dragon.

Grim struggled to stay on and keep the false dragon under control. It was thrashing wildly in the air. Even Grim, an experienced rider, had trouble staying on.

"Hurry up, brother," he muttered under his breath.

He heard the Ruby dragon roar and try to flame the false dragon in a way that would not burn Grim.

"Do not hit Grim," Lief told the Ruby dragon.

"I am doing my best," the Ruby dragon told him.

"It's okay," said Hiccup. "As long as Grim minds his face, you can't burn him severely."

"And why is that?" asked Barda.

"Those clothes of his are made from dragon scales; they're fireproof," said Hiccup.

The Ruby dragon attacked again.

Grim curled up on himself, flipping the hood of his coat up to protect his head.

The false dragon had enough and turned on the Ruby dragon. The Ruby dragon banked hard to avoid being flamed by the false dragon.

"I do not dare fight with you on my back," she told her riders.

A howling roar and a blood-curdling shriek shattered the chaos of the battle. A purple blast streaked across the air and hit the false dragon in the face.

"Toothless!" Hiccup cried joyfully.

The Night Fury was flapping furiously to get to his rider. Behind him, the Baleful Banshee was pushing himself to his limits.

"**Deathshriek,**" Grim said with relief in his voice.

Toothless roared again.

"Hiccup! Jump to Toothless!" Grim yelled.

Hiccup used Barda as a support as he stood up.

"Jump now!" Grim ordered.

The others let out a cry of alarm as Hiccup jumped before Barda could grab him. He fell through the air until he saw the shadow under him. He grabbed onto Toothless' saddle and slipped his prosthetic into place and disengaged the independent tailfin. They pulled up from their steep dive.

"Good to see you, bud," Hiccup said.

"**Yes, we're together again,**" said Toothless. "**Just as we should be.**"

Grim soon jumped from the back of the false dragon. Deathshriek swooped in and grabbed Grim by his arms. He swung him up and onto his back.

"**You should have called sooner,**" chided Deathshriek.

"**We have a false dragon to worry about,**" said Grim.

"**I know, and it's a good thing we have help,**" Deathshriek said.

"**The Ruby dragon is in no condition to fight,**" Grim told his dragon.

"**I wasn't talking about the Ruby dragon,**" Deathshriek said.

A roar from the south, the direction Toothless and Deathshriek came from, caught their attention. It was followed by another roar and then another.

"Now what?" Hiccup moaned.

"There are three more dragons," said the Ruby dragon. "You told me there were only two."

"That is what I was told," said Lief.

Deathshriek came around to fly next to the Ruby dragon.

"**I know those roars,**" said Grim.

Toothless flanked the Ruby dragon's other side.

"Grim, what's going on?" Hiccup asked. "More fakes?"

"No." Grim smirked. "Friends."

The false dragon prepared to attack them. Below, the ground explode up and a hissing roar was accompanied by a vortex of fire.

"That's a Whispering Death!" Hiccup cried. "What is one doing here?"

A dragon with a massive wingspan charged the false dragon and hit it with his wings. A large gash appeared on the false dragon.

"A Timberjack?" Hiccup said. "A Whispering Death and a Timberjack working together. What -?" Hiccup turned back to his brother who had a big smile on his face. "Grindheart and Axewing! What are they doing here?"

"Friends of yours?" Barda shouted.

"You bet they are!" Hiccup said, a smile even bigger than Grim's spreading across his face. "But who are the other two?"

An orange and gray Nightmare flew into view and fired at the false dragon.

"Ember-Ash!" said Hiccup. "And the fourth is -."

A great shadow descended on the false dragon and grabbed it. The shadow exploded into flames, revealing it as another, much larger, Nightmare.

"Blackscar," Grim finished.

The false dragon was burned and cut and decided that seven dragons was too many opponents to deal with. It let out a final roar and flew off.

Blackscar fired off a final flame at the false dragon as it flew away.

"**Hiccup! Grim!**" cried Ember-Ash, swooping over to them. "**It's so good to see you again.**"

"**You are in trouble, hatchlings!**" Blackscar snarled.

Hiccup looked over at Grim. "We're in trouble, aren't we?"

"In a sense," Grim replied.

They flew back to the outside of the city and landed.

Hiccup rubbed Toothless. "I'm glad to see you, too."

Toothless licked Hiccup.

Grim and Deathshriek nudged each other before Grim turned to the other dragons. A screech sounded from Ember-Ash and a black shadow pounced on Grim.

"Fearcloak!" Hiccup laughed.

The Creeping Shadow curled around Grim's shoulders and purred.

Grim purred back. "**Hello, my little friend.**"

"**The others have been worried,**" said Fearcloak. "**Stoick has been in a state. I wouldn't be surprised if he started spitting fire himself.**"

"And who are these dragons?" the Ruby dragon asked in a tense tone.

"I guess introductions are needed," said Hiccup. "This is Toothless."

"And Deathshriek," said Grim.

The Night Fury barked a hello and the Baleful Banshee gave a bow.

Hiccup turned to the other dragons. "And these are Grindheart, Axewing, Ember-Ash, Blackscar, and Fearcloak."

"**This is Æ•thas, the dragon of the Ruby,**" Grim growled.

"**A very lovely dragoness,**" Deathshriek said.

"I will have to be aware of this one," said the Ruby dragon, looking at Deathshriek.

"**Charming,**" sneered Blackscar. "**Just like his rider.**"

"**Excuse me?**" said Grim.

"**Well, I don't see princesses swooning at your brother's feet,**" said Blackscar.

Grim pinched the bridge of his nose.

Deathshriek and Toothless snickered in their dragon voices.

"Let me guess," smirked Hiccup.

"Let's not and say we did," said Grim.

The dragons snickered some more and Hiccup joined them.

Grim ignored them.

"Sorry, Grim," Hiccup tried to apologize with a straight face.

"You have a mate?" the Ruby dragon asked.

Hiccup nearly fell down laughing at Grim's flush.

"That is nothing to be ashamed of," said the Ruby dragon. "Love is a beautiful thing. Some are not as lucky as you."

"I am not ashamed," said Grim. "But I do not tease my brother about his girl."

Hiccup stopped snickering. "Sorry."

Grim turned to the Ruby dragon. "And there is nothing official between us yet."

The Ruby dragon looked at Broome. "You should return to the city, young king. I believe the people of Broome are becoming worried."

* * *

><p>They returned to the dance hall with Toothless, Deathshriek, and Fearcloak. Grindheart, Axewing, Ember-Ash, and Blackscar stayed with the Ruby dragon, who was resting outside of the city. The dragons would protect her if the false dragon returned. Grim found a place to wash the blood off and change his clothes. Quite a stir was made when Toothless and Deathshriek followed Hiccup and Grim in. No one noticed the new layer to Grim's new cloak, which was Fearcloak hanging off his shoulders as he often did. Toothless and Deathshriek took their place sitting behind Hiccup and Grim, who went back to their abandoned meals.<p>

Lief and Hiccup assured everyone that the dragons were not a threat and would behave. No one wanted to come to the table where they sat. Lindal kept her eyes on Toothless and Deathshriek, going as far as bringing a spear with her.

"I would put the spear away, Lindal," Grim said as he handed a piece of baked fish to Fearcloak.

Lindal jumped when she saw what she thought was a cloak move. Fearcloak jumped from Grim and decided to join Jasmine, Filli, and Kree.

"You do not threaten them and they will not threaten you," continued Grim.

Toothless looked at the spear and growled.

"It's okay, bud," Hiccup assured. "She's not going to hurt you. She's just concerned."

Toothless and Deathshriek each got a taste of roasted venison. They weren't overly fond of the meat, but took it as a treat. Hiccup would give Toothless a cooked fish now and then.

Hiccup leaned over to Grim. "I think those girls are going to ask you to dance."

Grim glanced over at the group of girls he saw earlier. They were all watching him and whispering to each other.

"**I think you should give them a show,**" Deathshriek said from his place behind Grim. "**I'll sing and you can dance.**"

Grim listened to what the musicians were playing. "**I have a better idea.**" He turned to Hiccup. "Do not laugh."

"What?" asked Hiccup.

Grim got up from his seat.

"Grim, why would I laugh?" Hiccup called.

Deathshriek followed Grim down and the two of them made their way over to the little stage. He made a barking sound that startled everyone and started growling low.

"What is he doing?" asked Jasmine.

Grim began to whistle along.

"I believe they are making their own music," said Barda.

"They're going to sing," Hiccup said with a smile.

"A 'nÃ-on mhÃ-n Ã³, sin anall na fir shÃ°irÃ-. A mhÃ;ithairin mhÃ-n Ã³, cuir na roithlÃ°an go dtÃ- mÃ°. DÃ°lamÃ;n na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;n Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;n na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ- in Ã°irran."

"**DÃ°lamÃ;in, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach,**"
Deathshriek added.

Hiccup gave Lief a shove. "Get down there and dance. They're putting on a show for you."

"TÃ; ceann buÃ- Ã³ir ar an dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. TÃ; dhÃ; chluais mhaol ar an dÃ°lamÃ;in moarach. BrÃ³ga breaca dubha ar an dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. TÃ; bearÃ©ad agus triÃ°s ar an dÃ°lamÃ;in moarach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ- in Ã©irran."

Lief and Jasmine went down to where the dancers had stopped. They heard enough of the song and with Deathshriek's growls and trills, they could dance to what was being sung.

"DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ- in Ã©irran. GÃ³ide a thug na tire thÃ°? Arsa an dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. Ag sÃ°irÃ- le do nÃ-on, arsa an dÃ°lamÃ;in moarach. Rachaimid chun NiÃ°ir leis an dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. CannÃ³imid brÃ³ga daora ar an dÃ°lamÃ;in maorach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ- in Ã©irran."

A few of the other dancers started again.

Lindal stood up and held her hand out to Barda. "May I have this dance?"

Barda chuckled. "I thought the men were supposed to ask the women."

"You were taking far too long," Lindal replied, grabbing his arm.

"Ã" chuir mÃ© scÃ©ala chuici, go gceannÃ³inn cÃ-or dÃ-. 'SÃ°'n scÃ©al a chuir sÃ- chugam, go raibh a ceann cÃ-ortha."

"**DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ- in Ã©irran.**"

"DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ- in Ã©irran. Cha bhfaigheann tÃ° mo 'nÃ-on, arsa an dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. Bheul, fuadÃ³idh mÃ© liom Ã-, arsa an dÃ°lamÃ;in moarach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ- in Ã©irran. DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ-, b'fhearr a bhÃ-. DÃ°lamÃ;in na binne buÃ-, dÃ°lamÃ;in Gaelach. DÃ°lamÃ;in na farraige, b'fhearr a bhÃ-, b'fhearr a bhÃ-. B'fhearr a bhÃ- in Ã©irran."

They ended the song and bowed.

Grim returned to their table and looked at Hiccup. Hiccup was holding his hand up to his mouth.

"I told you not to laugh," said Grim.

"I'm not laughing," said Hiccup. "Who's laughing?"

Grim raised an eyebrow.

"Okay," said Hiccup. "There's nothing wrong with your singing. I just found it a little funny that you were singing about seaweed." Hiccup dissolved into snickers, trying desperately to keep a straight face when he promised his brother he wouldn't laugh.

A girl about their age walked up to Grim. "May I have this dance?" she asked quietly, strange since the people of Broome were very boisterous.

Grim stood up and followed the girl.

"Hey, what do you know? He'll actually dance with another girl," Hiccup commented.

Deathshriek came up behind Hiccup and snorted down his collar.

Hiccup batted Deathshriek's nose away.

* * *

><p>DÃ°lamÃ½n doesn't fit the time period, but it was the best I could do and some of you may remember part of the lyrics from Dragon Brothers. To be honest with you, I never knew they were really singing about seaweed until I did a little research on the song. If you look up the translation, it's a bit of nonsense, but it's funny. Also, listen to the song and try to follow by reading the lyrics.**

6. Chapter 6

They decided they weren't going to go to D'Or and Raladin. After what happened last night, they slept in a guest house and left at the break of dawn. Hiccup was on Toothless with Lief sitting behind him. Hiccup was eating fried potato fingers he picked up from the docks. Grim had Deathshriek fly on Toothless' left. He was silent and stared ahead as they flew. Barda and Jasmine were riding on Ember-Ash, who was wearing a modified saddle on Toothless' right. The other dragons followed behind them. Fearcloak decided he wished to cling to Grim's back instead of trying to keep up with the much larger dragons.

The Ruby dragon told them she would be fine and said all the dragons from the north were allowed in the Ruby territory without fear of being attacked by her, without reason, of course. Hiccup and Grim promised they would visit the Ruby territory again since they wanted to see D'Or and Raladin, even if it was only a flyover.

"At this pace, we will be flying over Raladin in a few hours," Lief told Hiccup.

Hiccup looked over his shoulder. "Do you want to stop there?"

"It would be wise to keep moving," said Lief. "We need to find the Opal dragon as quickly as possible."

"The best way of getting its attention would be to cross the border with the dragons," Barda called.

"I do not wish to risk harm to any of us," said Lief.

A raspy roar sounded behind them. Grindheart was flying under Axewing's wingspan to keep the sun out of his eyes.

"I've fought a Night Fury. I can defend myself against one this land's dragons," Grim translated.

Hiccup patted Toothless' shoulder. "Do you want to do, bud?"

"**We can do it,**" said Toothless.

Hiccup nodded. "Okay."

"**Grim?**" Deathshriek called to his friend softly. He waited for Grim to answer, he said nothing. "**I know you don't like fighting other dragons, especially if dragons are supposed to be our allies. I will not blame you if you do not like this idea.**"

"**We will proceed,**" said Grim. "**This is the fastest way to get the dragon's attention.**"

"Lief, do you not remember what happened when we crossed the Opal border with another dragon?" asked Barda. "It was willing to kill us."

"It won't kill us," Grim assured them. "When we cross, let me take lead."

"Be careful," Lief told him. "It does not know you."

A few hours later, they flew over Raladin.

"It will not be long now," Lief said.

Another hour later, they crossed the border to the Opal territory. Grim and Deathshriek took lead with Hiccup, Lief, and Toothless not far behind them.

Lief's hand hovered over the Opal.

Hiccup glanced behind him and saw Lief with his hand over the Belt. "Anything?"

"No."

"Did you give it any warning that we're here?"

"I did," replied Lief.

Grindheart let out a roar. "**I smell it! North of us.**"

Grim turned to the north. Their dragons prepared for the fight. Blackscar moved so he blocked Ember-Ash and his riders.

They heard the roar of an angry dragon.

Grim immediately brought Deathshriek around and they flew at the rainbow dragon speeding towards them.

"What are they doing?" cried Jasmine.

"Young fool!" Barda yelled.

Deathshriek showed no fear as he came up to the Opal dragon and showed he was no threat by not flashing his white facial markings. He felt Grim give the command to stop. He hovered where he was.

"We have to do something!" cried Jasmine. "The dragon will tear them apart! Lief, tell it not to attack!"

Lief's eyes closed as he implored the Opal dragon not to attack.

Hiccup turned Toothless to follow Deathshriek, but Blackscar got in their way.

"**No!**" the black Nightmare ordered. "**This is between dragon and dragon speaker.**"

The Opal dragon stopped several yards before Deathshriek and Grim. "You are trespassing."

Grim knew it was a male dragon, and by the tone of his voice, he was also a dragon of rank, an alpha or perhaps close to an alpha. These could be the best dragons to deal with or the worst.

"**A necessary evil, cousin,**" Deathshriek said.

The Opal dragon looked back at the other dragons.

"It hears my pleas," Lief announced. Everyone let out a sigh of relief. "It will not attack without good reason."

"Hopefully the young fool will know to stay on its good side," said Barda.

Hiccup smiled. "It's a dragon. It's a rare occurrence that they don't like Grim."

The Opal dragon returned his attention to Grim and Deathshriek. "Who are you that you ride a dragon?" he asked Grim.

"I am a dragon rider of the far north," replied Grim. "My brother and I, along with our dragon partners, were brought to Deltora in a storm. We have learned there is a danger to dragons here. Four of the seven have already been attacked, two severely wounded, but they will fly again. Our concern is the remaining dragons will be attacked."

"What are they saying?" Jasmine asked.

"He's probably telling it what has happened," Hiccup answered.

Grim looked over his shoulder. "Is it possible we can continue this on the ground? The young Nightmare is not accustomed to passengers and we have been flying since dawn without rest."

"We may," said the Opal dragon.

Deathshriek and the Opal dragon descended, Deathshriek throwing a call over his shoulder for the others to follow. Once they were on the ground, they began telling the Opal dragon what happened. When they finished explaining everything, the Opal dragon asked to speak to Lief in private.

Hiccup and Grim looked at each other.

"What do you think they're saying?" Hiccup asked.

The Opal dragon led Lief out of earshot of everyone.

Grim turned to Grindheart and Toothless. "***Can you hear?***"

"***No,***" was their reply.

Deathshriek also shook his head.

Grim became invisible.

"Grim, do you think the Opal dragon is in as much danger as the others were? I mean, we fought four of them and two of them were injured badly." Hiccup received no answer and realized Grim was not standing by him. "Of course, you had to find out what they're talking about."

"There has been no invasion in my land," the Opal dragon was telling Lief. "I have noticed activity in the land of the Lapis Lazuli. The territory is none of my concern."

"Your territory is only part of Deltora," said Lief. "What can affect one territory can affect the rest. If it weren't for the riders, Deltora would be mourning the loss of Fidelis, Joyeu, Veritas, and Forta. Forta is not even a year old. She has so much ahead of her. I witnessed what was done to Fidelis and Joyeu. It will take time for them to recover fully."

The Opal dragon was silent, thinking. "Forta has a guardian in Veritas, though I do not agree with the dragon being outside of his territory. Fidelis and Joyeu will recover."

"Are you not concerned you may be attacked?" asked Lief.

"If I am attacked, I will fight," said the Opal dragon. "Thank you for informing me of these matters."

Lief sighed. "I am worried. It is a blessing Hiccup and Grim were brought to us. You are the last seven dragons of Deltora, dragons being one of the few things the Shadow Lord fears. We cannot lose you."

"Death is part of life, young king," said the Opal dragon.

"Hopian, all I ask is you be careful," said Lief.

Hopian flicked his tongue out. "I know you are there," he hissed.

Grim appeared to them.

"How much have you heard?" asked the Opal dragon.

"Enough," replied Grim. "I had a few questions of my own, but they can wait."

"And I have a few questions as well," gaped Lief. "One of them being how you did that."

"The short answer is an enchantment by a witch," replied Grim. "Hiccup has a similar power."

The Opal dragon lowered his head to have a better look at Grim. "Ask your questions, dragon rider."

"Do all of you Deltoran dragons only care what happens in your own land?" asked Grim. "Do you care so little about others, your brothers and cousins?"

"The dragons of other tribes are no brothers of mine," the Opal dragon said.

"Are you so certain of that?" asked Grim.

Lief blinked. "What are you talking about, Grim?"

"I have spoken to the dragons of Dragon Island and Grim Island," replied Grim. "They told me the stories of the old dragons where their bloodlines are from. Night Furies and Baleful Banshees share a common ancestor. Is the purity of things so sacred to you that you will not help others in need?"

The Opal dragon blinked. "Speak clearly."

"Doran wrote about an Opal dragon he met on his adventure around Deltora to write the guide book," Grim said. "The son of an old friend, the most ancient of the tribe at the time. I assume he was referring to you. The Opal dragon witnessed a Ruby dragon being attacked by the Ak-Baba. The Ruby dragon was killed and the Opal dragon did nothing to stop it."

"It sounds correct," the Opal dragon said with a slight nod.

"Why did you not help the Ruby dragon?" Something had changed in Grim's voice. The usually unshakable façade was cracking. He sounded older, tired, and sad. "How could you watch it be slaughtered and it never crossed your mind to help it?"

The Opal dragon was quiet for a long time. Lief and Grim waited for an answer.

"You are a dragon rider," the Opal dragon finally said. "You must understand that dragons are very territorial creatures. We do not leave our territories for any reason, unless by request of the king." He looked to Lief. "Other lands do not concern us. We care for our own."

Grim blue eyes were brimming with tears. A few spilled over and ran down his cheeks.

"You weep for it," the Opal dragon stated softly.

"I weep for you."

Lief and the Opal dragon were surprised at the statement.

"I weep for you because you do not understand. You see the tribes as pieces, individual jewels, like the Gems in the Belt. When the Shadow Lord came, Adin rallied everyone together, people of Del, of the Plains, of the Mere, and more. They fought beside each other at Hira along with the Opal dragons. One tribe could not defeat the Shadow Lord alone. They came together and were stronger than their individual parts. I respect you dragons have your own territories, but looking after yourself is the same as what the Torans said to Adin when he first asked for their aid; their tribe was only concerned about themselves. If the world was like that, many more would be dead and many civilizations would disappear from existence."

Grim walked away.

Deathshriek, sensing Grim was upset, followed after him.

Lief felt sick to his stomach. He knew the story of Adin and could see it happening with the dragons even now, but if the dragons weren't so concerned about their own tribe, then perhaps many more of Deltora's dragons could have been spared.

"You need to understand that Grim was exiled and left to die." Neither of them heard Hiccup walking up to them. "The dragons of a different region saved his life and took care of him. Later, my tribe became his tribe. He's of Celtic blood, enemies of the Norse for many generations. Even when a different Celtic nation asked for our help, Grim put aside those feelings to help them."

They didn't need to know Grim originally did it to save the dragons of Scotland.

Hiccup rubbed the back of his neck. "I guess what I'm trying to say is when you face a common enemy, it doesn't matter what color you are or what your heritage is. You could be black, blue, red, even rainbow, but at the end of the day, it's not about color, it's what you've done."

The Opal dragon looked down his snout at Hiccup. "You are young and do not yet understand."

Hiccup shrugged. "Maybe you're old and too bullheaded to understand."

Lief clamped his hand over his mouth, but not before a snicker escaped. This made Hiccup laugh. The more the boys tried to stop laughing, the more difficult it became. The Opal dragon said nothing.

* * *

><p>Grim regained his composure and began checking on Ember-Ash for saddle sores. It was during this time Deathshriek went over to the Opal dragon.<p>

"**You certainly put Grim in a state,**" the blue and black dragon said.

"It was not my intention," the Opal dragon countered.

Deathshriek grunted and gave a nod. "**Grim takes the death of a dragon very hard. The first dragon he ever met was slaughtered by his people. Grim has never fully recovered from it. I doubt he ever will.**"

"He was bonded," said the Opal dragon.

Deathshriek nodded.

"You understand a true bond between you and him will be difficult," the Opal dragon added.

"**I am well aware. It has been two years. While we know each other very well, and Grim knows me more intimately than Emerald, a bond as deep as theirs hasn't formed.**"

"Do not lose hope."

"**I haven't, but I understand that there may never be a day where our bond is as strong.**" Deathshriek walked away.

They only rested for an hour before they decided to move on to the next territory.

"We'll stop in Rithmere," said Lief. "The Lapis Lazuli dragon makes its nest in the north. Rithmere is to the south, but we will be able to find better lodging."

Grim clenched his jaw.

Hiccup noticed. "Look, I know you don't like all this waiting around, but what else are we going to do?"

"We can go ahead," Grim said.

"Right and we'll get lost and probably attacked because Lief isn't with us to tell the dragons not to fry us," Hiccup pointed out.

"I know!" snapped Grim. He sighed. "I know. I'm sorry, Hiccup. This is really hard for me."

Hiccup put his hand on Grim's shoulder. "I know, Grim. I don't like this either."

Grim gave a nod. He went over to the Opal dragon.

"I feel as though an apology is in order, Dǎ³chas," he called.

The Opal dragon straightened up. "Dǎ³chas? Is that your word for dragon?"

"It is the Irish word for hope. I thought it would be fitting, since you do not believe in using true names."

The Opal dragon hummed. "I understand your anger, young one. Dragonfriend was also prone to fits of rage when it came to dragons, no matter what territory they dwelt."

Grim bowed his head.

The Opal dragon reached his talon under Grim's chin and gently lifted his face. "You are destined for great things, dragon rider."

Grim purred. "***You are not the first to tell me this.***"

The Opal dragon's mouth twitched in a smile. "***You are destined for great things,***" he said again. "***And I hope you will find them.***"

The Opal dragon followed them to the border of the Lapis Lazuli and bid them farewell.

* * *

><p>They had the dragons land outside of Rithmere to stay for the night. Lief had chosen the Games Inn to stay at. Apparently it was owned and run by a friend of theirs and they wouldn't get cheated for their rooms.<p>

"They would have to be fools to try to cheat their king," Grim muttered under his breath to Hiccup.

"Not like they would try to cheat you," Hiccup smirked. "You're intimidating."

Lief, Barda, and Jasmine decided to take the time to visit their friend, but they told Hiccup and Grim they could explore the city if they wished. They were warned to hide their gold very well from pickpockets and to bar their doors at night to prevent sneak thieves. It seemed that few tried to steal by force, but Hiccup had little to worry about as long as Grim was next to him.

The streets were filled with stands that held games of chance. Hiccup and Grim avoided these stands guessing they were probably rigged. There were all sorts of food stands that sold sweet and spicy foods and drinks.

"I don't think I can go back to eating fish and bland bread once we get back to Berk," said Hiccup. He was munching on a small loaf of olive bread. "This is actually better than Broome."

"We would have to find a trader who could import these spices from the south," said Grim.

"Do you think we could grow some of these spices ourselves?" asked Hiccup.

Grim shook his head. "It would be too cold for the plants to grow."

Hiccup began thinking of ways to grow plants that needed warmer environments.

They took the corner and saw a caravan drawn by an old yellow

horse.

Hiccup smiled at the horse.

There was a man selling goods out of the back of the caravan. He was a large man with dark skin and blonde hair and beard. The side of the caravan read "S & N B Fine Wares Bought & Sold."

"Welcome!" said the merchant. "I am certain I have something to interest you, young gentlemen."

Grim smirked. "Let's see if this man has as silver a tongue as Johann."

The merchant grinned at them. "Rithmere is a city of color, but I must say, I do not believe I have seen two young men such as yourselves on my travels. Where are you from?"

"We came from the northwest," Hiccup replied. "We're from an island called Berk. It's very different from Deltora."

"Ah, then there must be things you do not see on Berk," said the merchant.

"And I'm sure we have things you don't see in Deltora," Hiccup added.

The merchant laughed. "I am certain you do."

Hiccup was eager to see what the merchant had. Grim stayed behind his brother with a smile on his face. Something caught his attention and Grim looked up at the sky. He couldn't see anything out of the ordinary.

"Grim, what's wrong?" Hiccup asked.

"Nothing," Grim answered, turning back to Hiccup. "Everything is fine."

"Hey, Grim! Check this out! Do you think we have enough money to spare on some of this stuff?"

Grim smiled. "We have some to spare, but don't forget we're the ones having to carry it."

"I know," Hiccup called.

Grim shook his head. "You would think we would have spent all our money on treats."

Hiccup looked over his shoulder. "Hey, I know exactly how much gold Trader Johann gave us for your work."

"Yours as well," Grim chimed in.

"Oh, no. We've been spending all your money so far," Hiccup countered. "I left mine back on Berk."

The merchant smiled. "You boys have apprenticeships?"

Hiccup stopped looking at the goods for a moment. "I'm a blacksmith, been that since I was allowed in the forge. Grim just started picking up blacksmithing. He's good, but nowhere near my level."

"I know enough to get me by," said Grim. "My brother here is quite the inventor."

The merchant turned back to Grim. "And you, my young friend?"

Hiccup smiled. "Grim can do a bit of inventing himself."

Grim held out the tail of his coat to the merchant to see.

He ran his hand over the black scales. "What are these made of? They are like dragon scales."

"They are," said Grim.

The merchant looked up at him suspiciously. "There are dragon hunters where you are from?" he asked almost darkly.

"Sadly, yes," Grim said. "But you don't have to kill a dragon to collect its scales."

"Grim goes around the archipelago collecting dragon scales for clothes," Hiccup explained. "The trader in our area loves him. He's the only one who can make them."

"And keep only the best for yourself?" the merchant asked slyly.

"Collecting is not an easy task," Grim said. "Dragon scales are fireproof for the most part. I can still be burned if the fire is hot enough, but a passing jet of flame is not much to worry about."

Hiccup knew collecting was easier than Grim made it sound. Grim only needed to put his Dragonese to work and the dragons would be more than willing to stand still and let him pull a few loose, shedding scales.

Grim caught something out of the corner of his eye. He quickly glanced up and saw a flicker of dark blue.

The merchant frowned at Grim. He then looked up at the sky. "What do you see?"

Hiccup looked at Grim, too. "What?"

"We have company," Grim told him softly. "Ã•dh MÃ³r."

Hiccup tried to get a look.

"It is circling," Grim told him. "I think it senses us. Go let Lief know."

"The king?" asked the merchant. "King Lief is here?"

"We're travelling with him and his friends," Hiccup told him.

"Ah, friends of the king," the merchant said. "I should have introduced myself sooner. My name is Steven."

"If you haven't guessed, my name's Hiccup and this is my brother, Grim."

Grim put his hand on Hiccup's shoulder. "I will meet you back at the inn. Be mindful of pickpockets."

"I will," said Hiccup. "Don't get into any trouble."

Grim left.

* * *

><p>Toothless and the other dragons were resting well out of sight of Rithmere. The Night Fury lifted his head and listened.<p>

What is it? Deathshriek asked.

I hear something, Toothless replied.

Deathshriek listened as well. He could hear the wing beats of a large dragon. ***Ah, the dragon has come. I will meet with it.***

Deathshriek turned invisible and flew up so he was above the Deltoran dragon. When he reached that height, he flew over it. He could see the dark blue scales. The dragon was smaller than the other Deltoran dragons. It was circling Rithmere.

If you are looking for me, I am up here, Deathshriek called.

The dragon startled.

We should continue this conversation outside of the city so we don't frighten the humans, Deathshriek added.

Deathshriek led the way outside of Rithmere and to where the other dragons were gathered. The two dragons landed and Deathshriek became visible to all. The Deltoran dragon glared at the group of dragons that had invaded its territory.

"You are not Deltoran dragons," said the dragon. The delicate dragon was female, just by judging from her voice.

No, we are not, said Deathshriek. ***We are dragons of Berk and Scotland. I am originally from the far north, a place the humans call Grim Island.***

"And what are you doing here?" asked the dragon.

Toothless and I were taking our riders to Scotland, replied Deathshriek. ***There was a horrible storm and we crash landed here. The others came looking for us when we didn't return home when we were supposed to.***

"It is certainly different seeing other dragons," said the dragon.

* * *

><p>Steven packed up his caravan and had Hiccup ride with him to the Games Inn.<p>

"Ah, my friends!" Steven called when he saw Lief, Barda, and Jasmine. "It is nice to see you again."

"Steven!" called Lief. "I see you met Hiccup."

"And his brother." Steven got down from his caravan. "Odd young man."

Hiccup got down. "That's Grim for you."

"Where is Grim?" asked Barda.

"He noticed the Lapis Lazuli dragon circling," Hiccup told them. "I think he went to meet with it."

Lief's hand went to the Belt. He paled. "It found the other dragons."

"Can't be too bad," said Hiccup. "If there's a fight, we'd hear it. Grindheart and Blackscar won't roll over and let another dragon kill them, even if they are in another dragon's territory. I mean, Grindheart and Toothless used to have a grudge. You should have seen those two fight."

"I assume they worked things out," Lief said.

Hiccup nodded. "They still get agitated with each other from time to time, but nothing like it used to be. Grindheart has some respect for Toothless since Toothless could have easily killed him in their last fight."

Lief looked in the direction of where they left the dragons. "I should be there."

"If Grim's there, it'll be okay," said Hiccup. "He can be quite persuasive."

* * *

><p>Grim could see the dragons from their hiding place along with what he assumed was the Lapis Lazuli dragon.<p>

The dragons were pleasantly talking, Deathshriek turning on the charm and flattering the Deltoran dragon. The Lapis Lazuli dragon looked very similar to the Shooting Star dragons of Grim Island with its coloring.

"I see all is well," Grim said, announcing his presence.

The dragons turned to him.

"**Grim, come meet the lucky lady,**" Deathshriek called.

Grim should have known the dragon was female by all the flattering he heard from Deathshriek.

"Ã•dh MÃ³r, Great Luck," Grim said. "I heard Lapis Lazuli dragons were daring and curious. Though I did not think you would circle Rithmere for us."

"I felt the Lapis Lazuli in my territory," said the Lapis Lazuli dragon. "I came to greet the king. I did not expect to see other dragons, dragons not of Deltora."

"And I hope none have given you trouble," said Grim.

"Only the one with similar colors to mine," said the Lapis Lazuli dragon, looking at Deathshriek.

"**Deathshriek, we do not need another Snotlout on Berk,**" said Grim.

The Lapis Lazuli's eyes widened at the dragon speech coming from the boy.

Grim turned to her with a smile. "You will have to forgive the intrusion. We are very pressed for time. There have been attacks on the other dragons by false dragons. We already warned the Opal dragon and the only one we need to warn yet is the Emerald dragon."

"The other dragons, do they live?"

Grim's smile widened. "You are the first to ask about the others. Yes, they all lived, including the little Diamond dragon."

"I am not concerned," said the Lapis Lazuli dragon, tipping her snout up in the air. "I was only curious."

Toothless snorted in disgust at her statement.

The Lapis Lazuli dragon looked down at the Night Fury.

Grim put his hand on Toothless. "Have you had any trouble in your territory?"

"No," answered the Lapis Lazuli dragon.

Grindheart hissed and began sniffing the air.

"**What is it?**" Axewing asked.

"**I smell something and it's not a dragon,**" Grindheart replied.

"**A fake?**" asked Ember-Ash.

"**Possibly,**" Grindheart said.

Grim and the other dragons looked up, searching for a glint of blue or gray.

Grindheart snarled. "**I can't see it, but I certainly know it's close!**"

"**I smell it, too,**" said Toothless.

"Ã•dh MÃ³r, do you smell it?" Grim asked.

"I smell an invader," she replied.

"Then why can't we see it?" Grim continued to look at the sky. It was clear with no dragon in sight. "They can mimic the colors of the other dragons." What little color in Grim's face drained.

"**Fire up in the sky!**" he ordered.

The six dragons began to fire randomly in the sky. One of Toothless' blast exploded on something. A blue dragon with silver specks on its wings appeared. It snarled at them and gained altitude.

"They're mimicking the Deltoran dragons' abilities," said Grim. "The others couldn't camouflage themselves. They're evolving."

The false dragon wheeled in the air and started back to Rithmere.

"**Eels and ice, no!**" screamed Grim.

Deathshriek flew into the air and began firing at the false dragon. It turned away only to loop back.

The Lapis Lazuli dragon roared and went after the false dragon.

"**Toothless!**" Grim jumped into the saddle. "**Let's find Hiccup.**"

* * *

><p>The people of Rithmere heard the roars of the dragons.<p>

"What is this?" shouted Steven.

A black dragon swooped down and landed.

"Toothless!" cried Hiccup.

Grim jumped down from the Night Fury. "Those false dragons are getting craftier. This one has the camouflage like the other Deltoran dragons. It almost got the drop on us. Get your shield, Hiccup."

Hiccup nodded and ran into the inn to get his shield.

"What about you?" Jasmine asked Grim. "Do you not need your sword?"

Grim turned to Jasmine. "My lady, haven't you learned yet?" A disturbing smile crossed his face. "I can be more dragon than warrior."

Grim threw his hands into the air and was picked up off the ground by an invisible force. Deathshriek became visible for a few seconds to flip Grim over onto his back and they both disappeared.

"**How are we doing?**" Grim asked.

"**The dragon is smaller and is having a hard time keeping up with all of us,**" replied Deathshriek. "**We are doing our best to keep it away from the city.**"

"**Good. Let's try to push it north,**" said Grim.

With all the dragons, they forced the false dragon out of the Rithmere area and to the north. They didn't stop pressing it until it is several miles away and still fleeing. They returned to Rithmere, Toothless and Deathshriek landing in the city itself.

"They are growing stronger," Grim announced to Lief. "This one had camouflage. They are becoming more like the Deltoran dragons."

"We must stop them," said Lief.

"If only it were that simple," Barda put in.

Grim stormed into the inn.

Hiccup ran a hand through his hair. "This is nothing like the Screaming Death we had to deal with. At least that was a dragon and we had some understanding of it, even if was only a few things out of the Book of Dragons and what we learned from Grindheart."

"We will have to kill them," said Jasmine.

Hiccup nodded. "That's probably the only reasonable solution."

"I do not like that idea," Lief told them.

"Lief, they aren't really dragons," Hiccup reminded him.

Lief turned to him with fire in his eyes. "You say they are not real dragons. I am listening to what you are saying. What if you are wrong?"

"They're dragon killers!" cried Hiccup. "What more proof do you need? An actual dead dragon? One of your friends?"

Grim came out of the inn with his pack, sword, and bow. "While you are standing here debating what your next move is, I am going to see the Emerald dragon." He got onto Deathshriek.

"Grim, wait!" Hiccup called.

Lief ran to Deathshriek, trying to stop them. "The Emerald dragon is highly territorial. If I am not there to tell it you are a friend, it will kill you."

Grim snarled. "I am not going to watch another dragon die if I can help it!" he yelled. "**Let's go, Deathshriek!**"

The Baleful Banshee took off to the north.

Deathshriek could feel Grim shaking on his back. "**Grim.**"

"**I know.**"

***You need to calm down,**" said Deathshriek. ***This isn't you. You're smarter than this. You need to calm down and think about what you are doing. We're going off alone, without the king, who is the only person who can call the Emerald dragon off, to help said dragon.**"

Grim sighed. ***I know.**"

***Do you?*" Deathshriek asked.

***I am not going to stand by and watch another dragon die!*" Grim snapped. ***I won't allow another meaningless slaughter!*"

***I understand that, but do you even have a plan?*" asked Deathshriek.

***I do,**" replied Grim. ***We tell the Emerald dragon what is happening and we stay until the others come and we know it is safe.**"

***Oh, yes, genius plan,**" Deathshriek said sarcastically. ***This is insane.**"

***Shouldn't make a difference,**" Grim said levelly.

"And where do you think you are going?" the Lapis Lazuli asked, flying next to them.

"To see the Emerald dragon," replied Grim.

***He is set on doing this,**" Deathshriek told her. ***You're better off teaching a fish to fly than talking him out of this.**"

The Lapis Lazuli dragon laughed. "So be it. I will take you to the border, but you must know, the Emerald dragon is not one to be easily reasoned with."

"Try calling off a Screaming Death," Grim said. "We are Vikings and dragon riders. Danger is an occupational hazard as Hiccup would say. I know I'm risking a lot, but I cannot stand by and do nothing."

The Lapis Lazuli hummed. "You remind me of Dragonfriend."

"I will take the compliment," said Grim.

The Lapis Lazuli dragon led the way to her northern border. "I hope you are both as charming as I think you are," she said. "You will need it with the Emerald dragon."

Deathshriek laughed. ***Grim can be quite the female's male when he chooses to be.**"

"Good," said the Lapis Lazuli dragon. "Because the Emerald dragon is female."

7. Chapter 7

***Today is my birthday! I thought I would celebrate it with a new

chapter for you guys. Just a little warning, this chapter can get a little dark at points, so be prepared. I don't want to ruin it for you, but thought I should let you know.**

* * *

><p>They flew until the sun began to set behind the Barrier Mountains.<p>

"This is the border," the Lapis Lazuli dragon told them. "After this is the territory of the Emerald dragon. I wish you good fortune."

"Thank you, Æ•dh MÃ³r," said Grim. He urged Deathshriek on.

"**She probably knows we have crossed into her territory,**" Deathshriek told him.

The farther they continued, the more concerned they became. The Opal dragon had sensed them right away and found them within moments of their border crossing. It had been twenty minutes and there was no sign of the Emerald dragon.

Deathshriek stopped and hovered. "**I know you don't like thinking this way, but maybe she is dead.**"

Grim growled. "**No. If we haven't found her body, then we do not assume her to be dead. Injured, yes, but not dead.**"

They continued to hover for a minute.

"**I should have asked Lief where they first spotted the Emerald dragon on their quest,**" said Grim. "**We would have better luck finding her if we had an idea of where she made her nest.**"

"**The Barrier Mountains may be close to the Shadowlands, but a dragon can easily see and be alerted to danger coming into Deltora from there**," Deathshriek rationalized. "**A good nesting site would be more to the north than to the west. Dread Mountain is the home to the Dread Gnomes and it wouldn't be smart to make a nest near a settlement of suspicious beings. It would be like trying to build next to a Changewing nest.**"

"**You're right.**" Grim ran his hand through his hair. His face brightened. "**Deathshriek, all the dragons we met so far speak human languages and Dragonese. Those false dragons do not.**"

"**What are you getting at?**" asked Deathshriek.

"**A distress cry,**" Grim answered. "**Perhaps she will try to answer back with a warning.**"

"**It's worth a try,**" said Deathshriek. "**You may want to cover your ears.**"

Grim was already a step ahead of Deathshriek, his hands clamped firmly over his ears. He could feel the Baleful Banshee filling his lungs and expanding his chest. This was not going to be mere fear inducing war cry or a shriek attack.

Deathshriek's blue facial markings paled to white. He roared. It was a heartbreaking noise; a dragon in distress cry and Deathshriek made it echo across the heavens. Grim felt it vibrate through him. It was a gut-wrenching sound. A dragon that made a sound like that was terrified for its life. It didn't matter if it was a Terrible Terror or a Monstrous Nightmare, to Grim it was all the same.

Grim whimpered.

They waited, listening. Deathshriek's ear fins swiveled trying to pick up the faintest of noises.

A roar answered them. It was a warning call, but not the call of a territorial dragon. It warned of danger and to get away.

Deathshriek needed no prompting. He turned in the air and began flying in the direction of the roar. They both turned invisible as they got closer to where the roar originated.

They were flying close to the Barrier Mountains now. At one time they were high enough, they could see over the mountains. They wished they hadn't.

"**Are we close?**" Grim asked.

"**I think we are,**" Deathshriek replied.

They flew low, skimming the smaller peaks of the mountain range, searching for the Emerald dragon.

"Oh, Thor and Odin," Grim breathed in horror.

Deathshriek paused and hovered.

Below them was a massive cage with a large green dragon inside. Around the cage were armed men. They were all dressed in rough clothes with wicked looking weapons.

"**They look like the Deltoran version of the Outcasts,**" said Deathshriek.

"**And people like them only trap dragons for one thing,**" Grim growled. "**We'll need help. You need to go back to Rithmere and get the others. Meet me back here. I'll try to stall them long enough for reinforcements.**"

"**Be careful, Grim,**" said Deathshriek.

The dragon landed and let Grim off.

"**I'll return as quick as I can,**" Deathshriek promised.

Grim grunted in response and he felt Deathshriek fly away.

Grim climbed down the peak to the camp. The men were gambling and sharpening their weapons. They were waiting for something. Grim wondered what it was. The Emerald dragon was captured and it would be very simple for them to kill her in that cage. So why would they be waiting?

"Where is that dragon slayer?" demanded one of the men.

"Honestly, I do not know why we are waiting," said another. "We could easily take care of the dragon for Bres."

"I do not trust that sorcerer!" snapped a third.

The second man whirled on the third. "That sorcerer has raised dragons from the dead to do his bidding. I will not be his next target!"

Grim growled. So there was someone behind the false dragons, this Bres.

These men were waiting on a dragon slayer. Grim smirked. Perhaps he could give them a dragon speaker.

Grim became visible and put the hood of his coat up. His dragon claws were retracted and his sword and quiver were strapped to his back. His coat was buttoned to hide his dragon spine dagger tucked in its sheath on his chest.

"Wait no longer," Grim said, stepping out of the shadows and into the firelight. "I am here."

The men, all ten of them when Grim did a quick count, jumped up with their weapons.

"Who are you?" demanded the second man.

"Bres sent me," Grim replied.

The man's face broke into a cruel smile. "Ah, our dragon slayer. You look as if you have had a long journey. Come and sit by the fire. We have some food you can have."

"Why not just kill the dragon now?" snapped the third man.

Grim turned to the man who spoke and then to the Emerald dragon. "It does not appear that dragon is going anywhere in the near future. Allow me to eat first. You are right; it has been a long journey."

Grim sat by the fire so he was able to watch the dragon. The men gave him a bowl of stew and Grim ate slowly. He needed to buy as much time as he could for Deathshriek to get help.

The man who greeted him sat next to him. "I am Rook, the leader of this group."

"Grim."

The man, Rook, laughed. "It seems to be a fitting name. You certainly strike a grim image. You are a bit late."

"I had some trouble with the creatures here," Grim answered. "They are certainly different than the dragons I am used to."

"Not too much trouble," Rook chuckled. "I hope Deltora's flying lizards are not too much for you."

"There have been few dragons that have been too much for me," Grim told Rook. "I can count on one hand how many of those I have encountered. This one will not cause me grief."

Rook continued to chuckle. He observed Grim's clothes. "Are you going to turn that dragon into a pair of boots?"

Grim blinked and looked at the Emerald dragon. "In that color? No. But I know a very lovely young woman who would look stunning in emerald. Let me tell you a few things about dragon skinning. It is not as easy as it looks. You see my clothes? It took me weeks to make these, hours of work over a forge. The hide has to be treated almost immediately or it will rot and be useless. As for the rest of the dragon, the teeth make wonderful jewelry and the claws and spines can be used for weapons. Sadly, I do not have the supplies to properly treat this one's hide. Honestly, it is a shame. This one is so beautiful."

"You can at least take the claws," said Rook. "How would you like to do it? A well placed arrow should do it in."

Grim shrugged, drawing attention to his quiver. "These arrows would do nothing to the dragon unless I shoot it in the eye. There is no guarantee that it will be a killing wound."

Rook huffed. "I lost three good men trying to get that thing into that cage. Let it suffer a little."

The dragon growled from her cage. "I should burned you all."

"Like you could, you slug," snapped Rook.

Grim was already on his feet and moving away from Rook. The Emerald dragon roared and fired at Rook. Rook went scampering behind several large boulders to protect himself.

"It is very unwise to taunt them," Grim told them serenely.

Rook growled.

Grim returned to his place by the fire. "Give it time to calm down. A riled dragon is very dangerous to fight." He hoped that he bought another hour for Deathshriek to return.

Even though she didn't know of Grim's plan, the Emerald dragon was giving them even more time. She thrashed in the cage, spitting flames and insults both in human and Dragonese.

Grim took this time to observe the dragon trappers. They stood little chance against one Deltoran dragon and they would stand no chance against the Berkian and Scottish dragons that were on their way. It was just a waiting game at this point.

An hour ticked by and then another. The Emerald dragon was not calming down, which Grim was very thankful for. However, she was tiring and Grim hoped Deathshriek would be back soon. She couldn't keep this up for long.

"**Grim.**" Grim didn't flinch when he heard Deathshriek's whisper in

his ear. "***We're on the other side of the ridge. Whenever you're ready.**"

"**Stir up the men,**" Grim replied softly. "**I want them in a panic. They'll make mistakes. Spare their lives if you can.**"

"**As always,**" Deathshriek said.

"**Go.**"

Grim felt Deathshriek's wing graze his arm as he left. He waited a half minute before standing up and drawing his sword.

Rook's eyes widened. "Now we can kill it?"

Grim slowly approached the cage.

The Emerald dragon growled at him. "If you think I am going to make it easy for you, human, you are mistaken."

Grim pointed his sword down and knelt in front of the cage. "My dear dragoness, I do not expect you to do anything for me.

Now!"

Several roars sounded from over the ridge and the dragons came into view. Grim jumped up from where he was kneeling and turned on Rook. Rook drew his sword and met Grim head on.

The dragons went after the men. They chased them off with their fire. Soon it was only Grim and Rook.

Hiccup, Lief, Barda, and Jasmine hurried down to them. Hiccup and Lief ran to the cage.

"Young king," said the Emerald dragon.

Hiccup began looking at the cage. "I think we can get it out. Is there a key?"

"That human has it," hissed the Emerald dragon. She was looking at Rook and Grim.

The other dragons, having chased the dragon trappers off, surrounded the area.

Grim met Rook's sword repeatedly. Rook was swinging wildly, rage taking over. Grim was more controlled, using his strength to repel Rook's attacks.

Rook staggered back and found himself next to the campfire. He kicked up some hot embers. Grim yelped as they got in his eyes.

"**Guts of an eel!**" Deathshriek lunged forward, but was stopped by Grindheart.

"**He'll still win,**" said Grindheart.

Grim tried to rub the embers out of his eyes so he could see even a little.

"**Grim!**" the dragons yelled.

Grim put his sword up and blocked a swing.

Lief drew his sword. "We have to help him."

Hiccup looked over his shoulder. "The dragons are right there. If they're not interfering, there's a reason."

Grim managed to get one eye open. He could see shapes, but nothing else. He had to rely on his ears and touch, much like Grindheart. He ducked out of the way of another slash.

"At least I hope there's a reason," Hiccup added.

Deathshriek growled from where he was standing. "**He draws blood, I'm biting a limb off.**"

Grim swung and caught Rook's arm. Rook swore and backed away. Grim advanced and cut him on the other arm. He brought his sword up and leveled it with Rook's neck. One wrong move and Rook was a dead man.

"Yield," Grim ordered.

Rook dropped his sword.

Barda and Jasmine rushed forward and restrained Rook.

Grim stepped away and rubbed at his eyes.

"You okay?" asked Hiccup.

"Yes," replied Grim, getting one eye open. Tears were running down his face as he tried to get the embers out of his eyes. The result between the embers and Grim rubbing his eyes left sooty rings around his eyes, causing him look ghoulish. "Can you get her out?"

Hiccup turned back to the cage. "Between two blacksmiths, I think we can. A key would be helpful or we're going to be breaking the hinges."

Lief walked over to Rook. "Where is the key?"

Rook spat at Lief's feet.

A dark spine shot across and pinned Rook to the rocky wall behind him by the shirt. They all turned to Grindheart. He had a smug look on his face.

They searched everywhere but apparently the key had been lost in the scuffle.

Hiccup went back to the cage. "Don't worry. We'll get you out."

"This is demeaning," the Emerald dragon said stiffly.

"You are hardly the first dragon to be caught in a trap," Grim called over, sitting down and waiting for his vision to clear.

The Emerald dragon snarled at Grim. "Dragon killer!"

The other dragons turned on her and snarled. Ember-Ash lit himself on fire in his rage. Grindheart's spines raised straight up on his body. The mountains echoed with roar of rage from Deathshriek as he turned on the Emerald dragon with his white facial markings showing.

"**How dare you! You know nothing of this boy! He has risked more for dragons than you will ever know. Forgive him for trying to save you by telling those humans he was a dragon slayer.**" Deathshriek punctuated his rant by spitting a small blue fireball in front of the cage. It wasn't an attack, but an act of contempt.

"**Deathshriek, that is enough,**" Grim said calmly.

The Baleful Banshee took one more look at the Emerald dragon before stalking away.

Grim stood. "Perhaps it would be best if I left you to speak." He followed Deathshriek, most likely to speak to him.

Lief and Hiccup went back to trying to get the cage open. Lief had a look of shame on his face. Grim had done so much for the dragons of Deltora that he did not deserve this.

Hiccup kept giving Grim worrying looks. It was easy to see that Grim and Deathshriek took the Emerald dragon's accusation hard. Deathshriek was pacing while Grim was standing by quietly.

"That was uncalled for," Lief finally spoke. "He was trying to help you."

A few minutes later, Lief and Hiccup recruited Barda's strength to disassemble the hinges on the cage. The Emerald dragon was free to stretch her wings. The other dragons looked at her with disdain. She gave them a stiff nod and excused herself to go hunting.

Hiccup let out a heavy sigh. "Well, that could have been much worse."

Grim turned to Lief. "I apologize, your highness."

Lief gave a small shake of his head. "You are not at fault here. You did what you needed to do to save her."

Grim looked over at Rook. "I doubt there is much else we can get from him. I already learned the name of the man behind the false dragons. His name is Bres. His reasons for the false dragons are unknown. However, it is clear he wants the Deltoran dragons dead."

"We may be able to learn this Bres' location," said Lief.

Grim nodded.

Lief walked over to the prisoner. "Rook, you have attacked the dragon of the Emerald, a dragon under my protection. Such an act is considered treason, for you have threatened the safety of Deltora. I am willing to show mercy if you tell us where Bres is and what his plans are."

Rook glared at Lief.

Barda reached down and shook Rook by the collar. "I would advise you to speak."

Rook growled. "I do not know what his plans are, only my part. My part was to capture the Emerald menace," he snapped.

A dagger materialized in Jasmine's hand. She held it under Rook's chin. "The only menace I see here is you."

Rook eyed the dagger. "Deltora will be rid of these creatures and then we shall be free again."

"You fool!" Barda said. "The dragons are protecting Deltora."

Hiccup shook his head. "Just like Berk before I convinced them they weren't the enemy." He turned back to Grim. "They have the same problems as we do."

Grim's mouth twitched. "The last I checked, we never had to battle a sorcerer before."

"We had help from a witch," Hiccup pointed out. "Not like we don't have some experience with magic."

The brothers were quiet for several moments.

"How are you?" Hiccup asked suddenly.

Grim smiled. It was a bit strained, but it reached his eyes. "I cannot expect every dragon to like me."

Hiccup smiled. "That would make things too easy."

Grim's smile widened. "Then life would be boring."

There was a horrible screeching sound, like that of a large bird.

"Oh, that didn't sound good," Hiccup groaned.

Lief looked down at the Belt. The Emerald and Ruby were pale. "No, it is not good."

Three giant bird creatures flew over their heads. They were multicolored with cruel beaks.

"Ak-Baba!" cried Jasmine.

The creatures passed them without a second glance.

"They are going after the dragon!" Barda called.

Grim jumped onto Deathshriek's back. "***Let's go!***"

Deathshriek took off, following the Ak-Baba. "***There are three. How would you like to do this?***"

"**One for each of us.**"

They looked behind them to see Blackscar and Toothless with Hiccup and Lief.

"We need to stop them before they find the Emerald dragon!" Lief called. "If she dies, the Emerald territory is unguarded."

"They're not going to kill her!" Hiccup said. "Not with us here."

"Each take an Ak-Baba and take it down!" yelled Grim.

Deathshriek caught a wind current and was able to fly ahead, above the Ak-Baba.

"**Get it!**" Grim ordered.

Deathshriek fired at one of the Ak-Baba. Toothless and Blackscar did the same.

Blackscar showed no mercy to the Ak-Baba he targeted. He swooped down and latched onto the creature with his talons. The Ak-Baba screamed in pain. Blackscar quickly silenced it by biting its throat. There was a crunch and the Ak-Baba went limp. Blackscar released it and let it fall to the ground below. He let out a victorious roar.

Grim took out his bow and an arrow. He fired one into the wing of the Ak-Baba. It let out a shriek and banked hard. Grim muttered a curse. He had been aiming for its wing joint. He wasn't used to shooting a moving target on a moving dragon.

"Toothless, plasma blast," Hiccup ordered.

Toothless' plasma blast hit the third Ak-Baba in the back of the head. It shrieked and banked in the opposite direction of the other Ak-Baba.

"Grim!" Hiccup called to let his brother know what was happening.

Grim glanced over his shoulder. "Blackscar!"

The black Nightmare whipped around and began following Hiccup, Lief, and Toothless.

"**Deathshriek, get above it,**" Grim told his dragon.

Deathshriek flew so they were above the Ak-Baba.

Blackscar caught up to Toothless. "**Need help, Night Fury?**"

"**No,**" replied Toothless. "**I can get it.**"

Toothless fired another plasma blast. It hit the Ak-Baba again. The Ak-Baba screeched.

Blackscar came up on the Ak-Baba's side, effectively cutting it off from dodging to the left. "**Now!**" he barked.

Toothless fired a third plasma blast, hitting the Ak-Baba in the back of the head. The Ak-Baba fell to the ground.

Grim was getting very annoyed. The Ak-Baba was very agile, like a Whispering Death. Grindheart could match it move for move, but Grindheart wasn't here. Deathshriek fired at the Ak-Baba two more times.

With a growl, Grim pulled his sword and jumped off of Deathshriek's back. He landed on the Ak-Baba's back. The Ak-Baba let out a cry of alarm.

"Off with your head," Grim snarled. He swung his sword above his head and brought it down with all his strength. Iron met bone.

"Whoa!" Hiccup had Toothless turn around to help Grim and Deathshriek. They didn't need to help them. They saw the Ak-Baba falling, body and head separate. Grim was falling with his sword in hand. Deathshriek dove down and caught Grim by the arms. He flipped him back up onto his back.

Grim sheathed his sword.

"Thank you," said Lief. "The Shadow Lord no longer has the Ak-Baba to terrorize the skies."

"The dragons aren't safe yet," said Hiccup.

They flew back to the others.

When they landed, Grim jumped off Deathshriek's back and drew his sword.

"Grim!" called Hiccup.

Grim held the point of his sword under Rook's chin. "Bres." His voice was mixed with Dragonese, not the rich, smooth sound Hiccup was used to hearing. "Where is he?"

Rook blinked nervously at the blade at his throat.

"Rook," Grim snarled.

Jasmine took out her daggers. "The Ak-Baba had crossed our borders because of you," she hissed.

"If the Emerald dragon was killed, the Shadow Lord could invade us through this territory," said Barda.

Hiccup frowned and looked at Lief. It was the Belt that protected the land. Then again, Doran had said the decline of the land had been because of the decline of dragons.

"Where is he, Rook?" Grim asked again. He pressed the tip of his sword closer.

The dragons growled threateningly.

Lief stepped beside Grim. "Rook, tell us. Do not lie; I will

know."

Rook sighed and began telling them what he knew, which was more than he let on. "Bres is a sorcerer. He conjured the false dragons to take the place of the Deltoran dragons. They are under his control."

"Those false dragons are attacking people," said Lief. "Destroying their farms."

"Of course," said Rook. "He needs the real dragons dead."

The Emerald dragon returned at that moment. Everyone turned to her.

"And I believe that is all you need to know." Rook lunged forward into Grim's sword.

Hiccup turned away, covering his mouth.

Grim pulled his sword out of Rook and took a few steps back.

No one said anything for a few moments.

Barda moved to Grim's side. "Killing is never easy. That was your first?"

"First human," Grim said quietly. "I've seen death before."

Barda nodded and gave Grim a gentle push in the direction of the dragons. Hiccup followed Grim.

"He killed himself," whispered Hiccup. "Why would he do that?"

"There could be a couple reasons," Grim whispered back. He was shaken by what happened. "So he couldn't tell us any more or he is so afraid of Bres that death seemed like a better option."

"Cowardly and dishonorable," the Emerald dragon commented.

"**One less thing we need to worry about,**" Blackscar put in. "**We only need to look for this Bres.**"

They buried Rook's body and planned their next move.

"We should go back to Del," said Barda. "Tell the others what has happened."

"And what about the dragons?" asked Jasmine. "We cannot leave them without any warning."

"They already have warning," Lief pointed out. "Hiccup and Grim have warned the Amethyst and Diamond dragons and we have warned the rest. We must go after Bres."

"We can't do much right now," Hiccup said. "The dragons are tired. They've been flying all day. None of us had a chance to eat yet."

"The Emerald territory is not known for good food," Lief warned. "The dragons could find something to eat, but none of us have brought food for us to eat."

"How close to the ocean are we?" Grim asked.

Lief shook his head. "Dread Mountain is closer. The Dread Gnomes will give us shelter for the night."

"The Dread Gnomes do not take kindly to strangers," Barda said. "They will not allow Hiccup and Grim into their mountain."

Lief turned to the brothers and the dragons. "I believe I could convince them."

They mounted up and flew to Dread Mountain.

The dragons were sent fishing when they reached halfway up the mountain. The River Tor wasn't too far away as the dragon flew. The humans were worried the Gnomes would attack first and ask questions later and with the dragons as tired as they were, no one wanted to take the chance.

"There is the warning," Lief said, pointing to a sign with two crossed arrows. "If we climb any higher the Dread Gnomes will attack."

The Emerald dragon hadn't left yet and she was watching the Berkians with interest. Hiccup was finishing locking Toothless' automatic tailfin in place before sending him off. Deathshriek and Grim were standing close by, the dragon waiting for Hiccup to be done to fly with Toothless.

"Give it a go, bud," said Hiccup.

Toothless flexed his tailfin. "***Good,**" he grunted.

"***Are you ready?***" Deathshriek asked Toothless.

"***Yes.**" Toothless didn't want to leave his rider, but he knew why.

Deathshriek turned back to Grim. "***Will you be all right?***"

Grim put his hand on Deathshriek's nose. "***I will be. Look after the others.**"

"***Of course, Grim,**" said Deathshriek. "***They will be fed and find a safe place to sleep. I'm sure the lovely dragoness knows some good fishing grounds.**" Deathshriek looked up at the Emerald dragon.

The Emerald dragon looked down her snout. "You will be fed. How well depends on you."

Deathshriek bumped Grim in the face with a huff. Grim returned the huff and they sent the dragons off.

Hiccup turned to the Deltorans. "Now what?'

"The Dread Gnomes are a suspicious people," Barda told them. "They

will not trust strangers."

"Which is good that you are with us," said Lief. "They will not attack us. We are friends."

"And it helps that we're with the king," Hiccup added. "It has its perks, huh?"

Lief smiled. "Not as many as you think."

The five of them started up the path, passed the warning sign. They came across a small building.

"This is a Gnome rest," said Lief. "If we wait here, a group of Gnomes will probably come this way."

They stayed in the Gnome rest and waited for the Gnomes to come to them.

* * *

><p>The dragons flew with the Emerald dragon leading to a good fishing place. The River Tor was the closest body of fresh water that could be trusted. The Emerald dragon told the others to help themselves.<p>

The Emerald dragon was ignoring their conversion.

"**Should have bit that human's head off when I had the chance,**" growled Blackscar.

"**It would have saved Grim some grief,**" Ember-Ash said.

"**He didn't need to see that,**" said Deathshriek. "**And then that coward used Grim's sword to do the deed.**"

"**Humans confuse me,**" Toothless said.

"**They've always confused me,**" Grindheart put in.

Axewing rolled his eyes.

"**Is Grim going to be okay?**" Fearcloak asked. He clung to Deathshriek as they flew, his smaller size putting him at a disadvantage at keeping up.

"**Oh, I do hope so,**" Deathshriek replied.

Blackscar huffed loudly. "**You need to have more faith in your friend, Banshee. That human is far stronger than you give him credit for.**"

Deathshriek nodded. "**Yes. But he has enough scars.**"

"**Something tells me some of those scars haven't healed,**" Toothless said.

"**No.**" Deathshriek looked below him. "**I don't know how else to help him.**"

The Emerald dragon led them down to the River Tor and they began fishing. They sat on the bank with their catches and ate.

Deathshriek stared at the half-eaten fish in front of him.

Fearcloak looked over at Deathshriek. "***Deathshriek, aren't you going to eat?***"

The other dragons turned to Deathshriek.

Deathshriek nudged the fish over to Fearcloak. "***You can have it.***"

Toothless crooned. "***Deathshriek, you need to eat something. We've all been flying all day. You haven't had anything but two bites. What's wrong?***"

"**I worry for Grim,**" Deathshriek answered. "***He's never handled death well.***"

"**I thought it was mostly with dragons,**" said Ember-Ash.

Deathshriek shook his head. "***Dragons, yes, but others as well. I remember when I was teaching him to hunt, he was hesitant. He won't think twice about it now, but Grim does value life. He did tell me he used to hunt for sport, but after Emerald, I think the sight of blood and the loss of life reminds him of what happened the Nadder. And with the danger to the dragons of Deltora, I fear it has reopened those wounds.***"

The Emerald dragon looked up from her place on the bank. "***Perhaps the wounds never healed.***"

Deathshriek sighed. "***I think you are right. I just don't want to see it.***"

The Emerald dragon dipped her head into the water and pulled something out. "***Maybe you would like this. Eel here is excellent.***" She tossed the eel at Deathshriek.

This sent all the other dragons into a panic.

"**Eel!***"

They all scampered away.

Toothless went as far as hiding behind Deathshriek. "***I am not getting sick again! I almost blew off Hiccup's good leg the last time I ate an eel!***"

"**Dragoness, are you out of your mind?***" screeched Grindheart. He quickly burrowed underground to get away from it.

The Emerald dragon didn't know what all the fuss was about. It was a perfectly good eel. If they weren't going to eat it, she would.

The other dragons watched in disgust and horror as she swallowed the eel without batting an eye.

* * *

><p>At the Gnome rest, Lief was keeping watch while the others got some rest. His hand hovered over the Diamond to give him strength to stay awake. Barda told him to wake him in two hours to switch watch.<p>

Jasmine was curled up on the floor with Filli pressed under her chin. Kree had been sent to tell the Gnomes they were there. The bird would return in time for them to get packed and ready for the Gnomes.

Across the hut, Hiccup was leaning against the wall, asleep. Grim was curled up like Jasmine was. He was using his coat as a blanket.

Lief did a double take at Grim. He thought he was asleep, but his face was scrunched up.

"Grim?" Lief called softly.

A chirping sound caught Lief's attention. It wasn't any bird he had ever heard and it was night. What bird, besides Kree, would be out at this time? He heard it again. Now it was more of a squawk.

Grim flinched violently in his sleep.

There was a final squawking roar and Grim jumped awake with a yell.

"Grim!" cried Lief.

Hiccup startled awake. "Hey, wha-? What's going on?"

Grim threw his coat off and ran out of the hut with his hand over his mouth.

Hiccup watched his brother run outside. "Grim, wait!" He staggered out after him.

Jasmine and Barda both woke with their weapons in hand.

Grim stopped at a tree and grabbed a low hanging branch before retching.

"Grim!" Hiccup came up behind Grim and pulled his dark hair out of his face. "Grim?"

Grim spat. "I'm fine." He went back to retching.

Hiccup looked away, disgusted. Looking over his shoulder, he saw Lief coming out to see what was happening.

"Is he all right?" Lief asked.

"Yes."

"No." Hiccup frowned at his brother. "There's nothing okay with you throwing up."

"I'm fine," Grim insisted.

Lief came over to them. He noticed Grim was holding on tightly to a Boolong tree branch. Clearly his gloves were protecting his hands or the thorns would have shredded the skin.

"Did you hear it as well?" Lief asked.

"Hear what?" asked Hiccup. "All I heard was Grim screaming."

Lief blinked. "The roar did not wake you?"

"What roar?" Hiccup asked.

Grim turned to Lief. There was absolutely no color to his face. "You heard it, too?"

"Yes," replied Lief. "It was almost like a squawking bird."

Grim went back to retching.

Hiccup ran back to the hut and grabbed a water skin. He brought it back to Grim.

Grim took a sip and spat it out before taking a drink. "I was dreaming."

"About what?" Hiccup asked.

"Smaragaid," Grim whispered. "This time I dreamt I was there when he was killed, not just the aftermath I remember."

Hiccup winced and nodded. Grim was not faint of heart. Emerald's death had scarred him and the current situation was opening those old wounds.

Hiccup was startled by a humorless chuckle from Grim.

"Look at me; the famed dragon speaker reduced to this," he said. "It's been two years. I should be over this."

"Can't blame you for that," said Hiccup. "From what I've seen, I'm ready to be sick myself."

Grim smirked. "Poor behavior for a Viking."

Hiccup smiled as Grim referred to himself as a Viking.

Lief came over and put his hand on Grim's shoulder. His other hand was over the Amethyst. He wished for the Gem's power to soothe Grim.

Grim leaned into Lief's touch, feeling the Belt's power through Lief. His mind cleared and his stomach settled.

A snap behind them alerted them they were not alone. Small figures with frizzy hair and beards had come out of the trees. All of them had arrows aimed at them.

"Greeting, King of Deltora," one said. It was a female with extremely

frizzy hair. "Please, place your weapons on the ground."

Lief did as he was told. "Gla-Thon, I thought we were passed this."

"You are a friend, but we do not know these strangers with you," said the Gnome, Gla-Thon.

Hiccup looked at Grim. His brother nodded. Hiccup took his dagger from his vest.

Grim himself removed his dragon spine dagger from its holder on his chest. He even went as far as removing his dragon claw gloves and placed him at his feet.

"They are my friends," said Lief.

"We are not offended in the least, Lief," said Grim. "It hasn't been long since our last war."

"And at least she's being polite about it," Hiccup chimed in.

Gla-Thon turned to him. "Only because you are with the king."

Hiccup shrugged. "Vikings are known to attack first and ask questions later. Or never in some cases."

The five of them were led into the Dread Mountain stronghold.

* * *

><p>The Gnomes were excellent hosts, although they looked at Hiccup and Grim with distrust. Their weapons were returned to them once they were known as friends. Grim didn't say much during the feast the Gnomes threw for them. He left to be alone when no one was looking.<p>

Hiccup eventually noticed his brother had disappeared and he excused himself to go look for him. Lief also went with Hiccup to see if he could find Grim. He had a few questions for Grim in regards to the roar he heard in the Gnome rest and why Grim reacted the way he did.

They found Grim looking out one of the small windows used to spot intruders.

"Hey," Hiccup said to get his attention.

Grim didn't turn.

"What happened back at the Gnome rest?" Hiccup asked. "It had to be something else other than dreaming of Emerald."

Grim turned to them. "I think you should ask Lief. He was the one who was awake when he heard the roar."

Hiccup looked at Lief.

"It was a squawking roar," Lief said. "It almost reminded me of the

Ak-Baba. I first thought the Topaz was showing me their spirits, but they would be evil and the Ruby repels evil spirits."

Grim mimicked the roar he knew Lief heard.

Hiccup's eyes widened. "That's a Nadder roar."

Grim nodded. "I never spoke Dragonese when he was alive. One thing I did know was when he was trying to get my attention. Now that I understand Dragonese, I realized he was calling me by name. My name, not my title." Grim looked down. "He was the first to treat me like me."

Lief reached out and put a hand on Grim's shoulder. "The dragon loves you. The Amethyst dragon once told me dragon spirits soar amongst the clouds. Perhaps your dragon friend flies with you still."

"I like to think that," Grim admitted. "At the same time, I want him to be at peace."

* * *

><p>Well, quite a bit happened in this chapter. The dragons are warned and we now know the identity of who is behind this evil. And now Grim has to deal with old memories and nightmares. But are they really memories and nightmares? I hope to have the next chapter up soon. I had wanted to have everything done today, but that didn't happen. So maybe this week? I'm getting so far behind with everything. I just hope it meets everyone's standards and beyond with all the time it's taking. Thank you so much for reading and please, leave a review or comment.

8. Chapter 8

Here's a longer chapter for you.

* * *

><p>They left before dawn to rejoin the other dragons. With the other Deltoran dragons warned, they decided to go back to Del and plan what to do from there.<p>

It took several hours to return to Del. They stopped in Rithmere to check in with Fardeep and Steven, who was still there, seeing if they would return.

After informing Doom of what happened, he began sending birds to their allies, calling a meeting in Del. There would be little they could do until they all arrived.

Hiccup and Grim found themselves looking for things to do. Hiccup got out his notebook and began copying some of Doran's notes about the Deltoran dragons along with what he found out during their adventures. He sketched the dragons onto the pages next to his entries. Fishlegs would kill him if he didn't make entries for these Deltoran dragons.

Grim spent time in the city, exploring the market square. There were many things that were exotic to Grim. There were fabrics, spices, and

jewels. Much was far too expensive for Grim. He was not a frugal person, but a bag of gold for an ounce of spice was far too expensive. He could understand paying for salt in its weight in gold, but not other spices.

Eventually Hiccup got tired of being inside and Toothless was demanding to go for a flight.

"Okay, okay," said Hiccup. "Let's go flying."

"That sounds like a good idea," said Grim.

Hiccup jumped, not having heard Grim and Deathshriek come up behind them.

Toothless gave a gummy smile. "***Want to race?***"

Deathshriek growled. "***Do you think you can win?***"

Toothless barked a laugh. "***You've never won against me.***"

"***Then let's see if we can change that. Three, two, one, go!***"

Grim, hearing everything, jumped onto Deathshriek's back. "Race you!" he called behind him as Deathshriek took off.

Hiccup was stunned for a moment. Toothless got his attention by hitting him in the back of the head with his tail.

"You cheat!" Hiccup yelled at Grim, jumping into Toothless' saddle.

It didn't take long for Toothless to catch up with Deathshriek.

Grim turned. "You can't blame a dragon for trying."

Hiccup laughed. "Try all you want. Snotlout has tried that before and we still won. So, where are we going?"

"Not far," said Grim.

Toothless pricked up his ear fins.

"What's up, bud?" Hiccup asked.

"***Dragon,***" replied Toothless.

The Topaz dragon came into view. "Greetings, dragons and riders."

"Hello, Tru," said Hiccup.

Grim bowed from where he sat on Deathshriek.

"What brings you outside of the city?" the Topaz dragon asked.

"It started out as a race that Grim and Deathshriek tried to cheat at," Hiccup said, glancing at Grim.

"Like I said, can't blame a dragon for trying," said Grim. "Night Furies are the fastest dragons we know of."

Toothless looked at Deathshriek. "***It was a good try. But I didn't think you would stoop so low.***"

"**Grim and I have our mischievous sides,**" Deathshriek said with a dragon smirk.

"So what are you doing, Tru?" Hiccup asked. "I thought you would still be resting."

"I have rested enough," said the Topaz dragon.

"In that case." Hiccup had Toothless barrel-roll over the Topaz dragon to fly on his other side. "Let's see how fast you can fly."

Toothless let out a happy roar and shot forward.

Grim shook his head fondly.

The three dragons flew through the sky and clouds. Hiccup was laughing and urging Toothless on. The Topaz dragon flew behind Toothless, keeping pace with the Night Fury. Deathshriek was gliding behind the Topaz dragon, not wanting to race. They landed at the coast not far from the city as the dragon flies.

The riders got down and began playing with Toothless. The Night Fury was pleased that he had beaten the Topaz dragon in a race. The others guessed the Topaz dragon let him win, but they couldn't bring themselves to ruin his victory dance. Toothless pranced about, kicking up sand. The prancing soon turned into chasing as the riders started a game of tag with Toothless.

The Topaz dragon settled down with Deathshriek beside him.

"Ah, to be a carefree dragonling again," said the Topaz dragon.

"**Compared to some, we are still hatchlings,**" said Deathshriek. "***My guess, Hiccup and Toothless are roughly the same age. Hiccup and Grim are year mates from what I can tell. I'm not sure who the elder is.***"

Toothless pounced on Hiccup and licked him. Grim levered Toothless up and onto his side. Hiccup got up and brushed off some of the slobber. Grim and Toothless continued to wrestle for some time before Toothless gave it up. Grim then turned his attention to Hiccup.

Hiccup laughed, but his smile faded some when he saw a predatory grin cross Grim's face. "Grim? What are you planning?"

"Are you nervous, little fish?" he asked.

Hiccup started backing away. "Grim, no."

Grim began advancing.

"No!" Hiccup yelled, turning and running.

Grim ran after him. It didn't take him long to catch Hiccup and wrestle him to the ground.

"**And honestly, I don't think it matters that much,**" Deathshriek continued. "**They're children. Children shouldn't know war or death. But they do.**"

Hiccup was yelling and laughing as Grim flipped him over onto his back. "Hey, Grim, I need that!"

Grim tugged off Hiccup's prosthetic and tossed it out of reach.

"What was that for?" Hiccup asked, trying to get up to hop over to get his prosthetic.

Grim was gentle when he tackled him back to the ground. "You can do it without the prosthetic." Grim was on all fours and waiting for Hiccup to move.

Hiccup would try to get up to hop, but Grim would pull him back down.

Hiccup stopped trying to get up and started looking at how Grim was on the ground. He was on his hands and knees and would launch off the ground using his feet. Hiccup was at a disadvantage with only one foot.

Deathshriek and Toothless watched with dragon smiles as their riders wrestled on the ground like dragons.

"**He's learning,**" said Deathshriek.

"**Hiccup was never one to give up, even when he lost his leg,**" said Toothless. "**He must have tried a dozen different tail mechanisms when he was trying to get me to fly again.**"

Hiccup pounced on Grim, pushing his full weight off his only foot. He was off course and ended up sliding off of Grim's side.

Grim chuckled and rolled Hiccup around, pinning him down at the chest.

"Okay, I give up," said Hiccup.

Grim got up and retrieved Hiccup's prosthetic. "It will take time for your legs to build up the strength to push off the ground like I do."

Hiccup put his prosthetic back on and continued to lay where he was.

"You should return to the city," said the Topaz dragon.

Hiccup checked the sun's position. It was starting to set. "They'll be worried."

Grim also looked to the west. There was a weird look in his

eyes.

Hiccup got up and tugged at Grim's sleeve. "Hey."

Grim glanced at Hiccup. "Have I ever told you about the story of Nuada Silverhand?"

Hiccup blinked. "No," he said slowly. "Where's this coming from?"

"I'll give you the short version of the story," said Grim. "Nuada was the god of war in Irish culture. He was the king of the island of gods at one point. There was a battle and Nuada lost his left hand. Now, according to their laws, a king must be physically unblemished and Nuada was forced to abdicate the throne. He went into exile and met a clever god that made him a silver hand. Now that he was whole again, he could take the throne once more. The king that took over was unpopular and he wasn't giving up the throne without a fight. There was another battle and Nuada won. The king who took Nuada's place was called Bres."

"Huh." Hiccup cocked his head to the side. "So you think we're going up against a god?"

"No," Grim said. "I'm just saying it is a very odd coincidence."

Hiccup gave a small laugh. "I guess that makes us Nuada." Hiccup noticed an odd look in Grim's eye when he said that. However, his brother smiled.

"I guess that it does."

They mounted up. The Topaz dragon volunteered to escort them to the very edge of the city, not wanting to be shot at.

"Dragon Speaker," the Topaz dragon addressed.

Grim had Deathshriek slow to a hover. "Yes?"

"Even in death, our loved ones wish to help us," the Topaz dragon told him. "Do not fear them."

Deathshriek felt Grim tensing on his back.

Grim calmly bowed his head in acknowledgement. They parted ways from there.

"What was that about?" asked Hiccup.

"I'm not sure," replied Grim.

* * *

><p>Grim slept little that night. It was after midnight when he got up and slipped out and went down to the archery field. He took out his sling and found several stones that would suit his need.<p>

The archery field echoed with a whipping sound, a slight crack, and then a thunk a second later when the stone hit the target. Night

wasn't the best time for target practice, but with the moon three quarters full, it was bright enough for Grim.

Grim didn't turn when he heard a large dragon walking up to him.

"**You haven't slept,**" accused Blackscar. "**How do you expect to fight if you don't sleep?**"

"**I'm tired of dreaming of death,**" answered Grim. He launched another stone. "**I'm tired of fighting.**"

"**To fight is to survive,**" said Blackscar.

"**For a dragon, not a human. As much as I act like one, I am still a human. I want peace.**"

"**And you think dragons don't?**" asked Blackscar. "**When the Death came to Scotland, every day was a struggle. Many died from starvation or were eaten by the Death. Dragons in Scotland knew peace once.**"

"**So do the dragons of Grim Island,**" Grim added. "**Grim Island is peaceful. I learned to speak there. I learned to fly there. I learned joy there. And then I left and I was put back into the battle for survival.**"

"**Things should be better now that the Outcasts and the Berserkers are no longer a problem,**" Blackscar pointed out.

Grim frowned. "**How did you know about that?**"

"**Grindheart and Axewing,**" replied Blackscar. "**Ember-Ash wanted to know what has been happening on Berk since the last we saw you. The hatchling wouldn't shut up the whole flight.**" There was a fondness in Blackscar's voice as he spoke. The younger Nightmare may have been annoying at times, but it was clear Blackscar liked him very much.

Blackscar became serious again. "**There is a time for war and a time for peace. Now is the time for war. Peace will follow.**"

"**Yes. Peace will follow,**" agreed Grim.

Blackscar walked away.

"**But the question is when is the war over?**" Grim added quietly.

* * *

><p>It took days for everyone to arrive. The first were Gers of the Jalis and Zeean of the Torans. They arrived the same day. Lindal came the day after with a Ralad named Manus. It was interesting meeting the small, blue-skinned, red-haired man the first time. Steven also came with his caravan. Along with him, he brought the Gnome, Gla-thon.<p>

In the days it took, Grim was in a foul mood. Hiccup and the dragons thought it best to stay clear of the dragon speaker, especially when

he snapped at Deathshriek. Hiccup didn't know what had been said, but it made Deathshriek very upset. The Baleful Banshee slunk off to the stables with his tail dragging behind him and his ear-fins drooped.

Hiccup took this opportunity to finish his notes on the Deltoran dragons. He spoke to Lindal to learn the story of Capra and the Ruby dragons. It was a very sad story and now that she knew both sides of the story, Lindal told Hiccup that the dragons were just protecting their nests. Hiccup understood perfectly.

The other dragons explored the area, but never went far from the city. Ember-Ash liked to meet up with the Topaz dragon and would return late in the day. He said he was learning about the old dragons.

With representatives from all seven territories present, they began planning.

They sat in the council chamber around a large table. Hiccup and Grim sat close to Lief, Toothless and Deathshriek sitting back. Next to Grim was Zerry. The boy was allowed into the meeting because he was one of the few Mere people they knew. He was nervous being here, but he wanted to help any way he could. Zerry knew he could learn something from Hiccup and Grim.

"We need to destroy these false dragons!" Gers yelled, slamming his fist against the table. "This Bres must be stopped!"

"If the dragons are killed, the Shadow Lord could break through Deltora's defenses," said Zeean.

"The Shadow Lord no longer has the Ak-Baba," said Lief. He turned to Hiccup and Grim. "The dragons have made certain of that."

"And Bres will be stopped," Barda said. "We need to find him first."

"It will not be simple," said Lindal.

"No one said it will be," Doom said.

"How?" asked Jasmine. "Deltora is no small island. It is impossible to search all of Deltora. Bres and the false dragons could be hiding anywhere."

"We may be able to narrow it down." All eyes went to Hiccup. "We've fought these fakes. They always ran away. We could figure out where they were going by which way they flew off in. But I need a map."

Doom pulled out a map from the inside of his jacket. It was worn and faded, but it would work perfectly for what they needed it for.

Lief handed Hiccup a pencil. "Show us."

Hiccup put the map in the middle of the table and leaned over so he could show everyone. "I might need a little help with the exact locations. We saw the fake red dragon in Broome." He marked the city with a small dot. And the fake gold dragon at Os-Mine Hills, which

is. . ."

"Here." Lief pointed to where the Topaz dragon's lair was.

"And then we were in Rithmere when the fake blue dragon attacked." Hiccup dotted the city. "And followed it to the Emerald territory. Now, the fake red dragon flew west, but I don't remember the Opal dragon mentioning anything about an invader. And there are the fake violet and white dragons. They flew north-east. Again, I don't remember the Opal dragon mentioning any fake dragons. Which can mean two things: One, the Opal dragon we talked to wasn't really the Opal dragon."

Lief shook his head. "It was him. I spoke to him through the Belt."

"Or two, the Deltoran dragons can't sense them," Hiccup finished.

"Which is a possibility," said Grim. "Toothless and Deathshriek both said they don't smell like dragons."

"So they are products of sorcery," said Zeean. "I always believed the dragons could sense magic."

"They can," Grim said. "At least ours can. They've been able to sense the Belt and there have been other times when they sensed magic."

Hiccup continued to look at the map drawing a few arrows in the direction they saw the false dragons fly off in. "Grim and Deathshriek chased the fake blue dragon north, but it could have turned and flew in a different direction when they circled back to get us. So knowing what direction the fake dragons flew off in, we can narrow down where they could be. They all flew away from the coast. We need to look inland."

"They will not be in Toran territory," said Zeean. "Toran magic protects the land. We would have sensed it."

"So we can mark off the Toran territory," said Hiccup. "So that narrows it down farther."

"Have any of you heard of more sightings?" Grim asked.

Gla-Thon spoke up. "We have seen no dragons other than the Emerald dragon and your dragons. None of us have heard of a false dragon until the king told us. But we do not have eyes in the eastern part of our territory. It is too unforgiving and almost uninhabitable."

Hiccup nodded and drew in pencil a line around the area where they needed to look.

They all looked at the area they needed to check.

"That is still a lot of land," said Steven.

Hiccup looked up at the peddler. "You had to cut across this area. Did you see or hear anything out of the ordinary?"

"No, we have not seen anything," Steven replied with a shake of his head.

Hiccup turned to Manus. The Ralad shook his head.

"There has to be a way to narrow the search area even more," said Barda.

Grim sat in his chair with a blank look.

"Grim?" Doom called. "What are you thinking?"

Grim didn't answer right away. "We've come across these false dragons before. We know what they sound like, what they smell like."

This got Hiccup's attention. "If the dragons know what they smell like, they can track them!"

"You have a lot of faith in your dragons," Zeean said.

Hiccup and Grim looked over at Toothless and Deathshriek. The two dragons were looking back at them, ready to work.

"Would they be able to smell these false dragons from such a great distance?" Manus asked.

"Not Toothless or Deathshriek," Hiccup replied. A smile lit up his face. "But Grindheart could. He relies on his other senses because of his poor sight."

"So all you need is your dragon to track the false dragons," said Zerry.

"It is not so simple," Gers scoffed.

Hiccup's expression remained bright. "Actually, it is. Grindheart was able to track us from Berk. He could track the false dragons. We have the area where we need to start searching. We start at one side with Grindheart and make our way to the other."

"The only drawback is we will have to do it at night," Grim added. "Grindheart tolerates sunlight better than other Whispering Deaths, but it still hurts his eyes."

"We need to act quickly," said Zeean.

Lief turned to the dragon riders. "How soon can Grindheart be ready?"

"As soon as the sun sets," replied Grim.

* * *

><p>They waited for the sun to set before leaving. Hiccup found Grim turned to the west.<p>

"The sun isn't going to set faster if you watch it," said Hiccup.

"I hope the dragons are okay," said Grim.

"Do you want to head out awhile and start pushing east at sunset instead of waiting?" Hiccup asked.

"I would like that. Will you be all right by yourself with Grindheart?"

"We'll be fine," Hiccup waved off.

It only took moments for Grim to be on his way west. Deathshriek flew into the sunset to where they would begin searching for the false dragons. It wasn't long before they crossed the border to the Diamond territory.

Deathshriek searched the area around by scent and sound. There wasn't anything he could sense that could possibly be a false dragon.

"Rider!"

A happy screech followed.

The Amethyst and Diamond dragons flew towards them to meet them. The Diamond dragon was flapping her wings as fast as she could.

"You came back! Can we play?" she asked.

"I think something can be arranged," Grim said.

They landed. Deathshriek went off to play with the Diamond dragon.

Grim took a seat with the Amethyst dragon.

"What brings you to the Diamond Territory?" asked the Amethyst dragon.

"We narrowed down the search area for the false dragons," Grim replied. "We're taking the other dragons and searching tonight."

"Other dragons?"

"A few of the Berk and Scottish dragons followed us since we were due back on Berk days ago," answered Grim. "We are not leaving until the job is done."

Grim proceeded to tell the Amethyst dragon what they had learned about the dragon and Bres.

"This is sad news," said the Amethyst dragon. "These false dragons have no fear of crossing the borders of the territories. They can attack us like the Ak-baba, coming and killing in mass. Now that the Ak-baba are gone, we have a new enemy, one who does not fear the Great Gems or the king."

Grim hesitated before speaking.

The Amethyst dragon caught that. "Is there something you wish to say?"

"Oh, yes," said Grim. "I have noticed the other dragons talking about their borders. They care little for what happens outside of them."

"This is true," said the Amethyst dragon. "We stay to our territories. Guarding them is all that matters."

"But not to you." Grim's blue gaze settled on the dragon's eye, a dangerous move since humans could be entranced with a dragon's gaze. However, the Amethyst dragon could see Grim was focusing on his eye ridge, not the eye itself. "Not you, FÃ-rinne. You would keep your oath to not invade the other lands, but here you are. You made a choice. You had to choose between your territory and the life of another dragon. You chose life." Grim had a slight smile on his face.

The Amethyst dragon had a soft look of pity on his face. "You met another who made a different choice."

"DÃ³chas, the Opal dragon," Grim whispered.

"All must make choices," said the Amethyst dragon. "Yet others can feel the decisions of the choices."

"And we all must live with them."

"But that is not what is troubling you, is it?"

Grim turned away.

"There is something else," the Amethyst dragon surmised. "The Opal dragon's choice troubles you personally."

"My first real friend was a dragon." Grim's voice was flat. "He was killed. I could not do anything to stop it. DÃ³chas had a choice, had a chance, and he did nothing. The guilt of my friend has always stayed with me. Recently, I feel it coming back to haunt me. Part of me feels he is back to condemn me for what I could not do. It is happening again. I do not want a dragon that needs to live to die because of something I could have prevented."

The Amethyst dragon sighed. "Young one, you cannot save everyone. Death is part of the natural process."

"There is nothing natural about being shot out of the sky, tied down, and killed by the sword," Grim said coldly. "Not for a dragon anyway."

The Amethyst dragon silently agreed. "Guilt is a very powerful thing. If you hold on to it, it will rule you. Be at peace knowing his spirit flies amongst the clouds."

Grim's face softened. "I thought that, but now. . ."

The Amethyst dragon frowned. "Now what?"

Grim took a breath to steady himself. "He never haunted my dreams. When he first died, I dreamt about that day. They were memories. I had a few since then, but nothing like what I have since Dread

Mountain. These weren't memories. These were twisted dreams of watching my friend die. It was a slaughter! From the stories Hiccup told me about the Vikings, they typically do not take their time like that."

Grim's face was pale. The Amethyst dragon thought he may be ill. He put his head down and nudged Grim with his snout. Grim put his hand on the dragon's nose.

"Dragonfriend often worried about things beyond his control," said the Amethyst dragon. "I hope you find peace."

"I will have peace when this is over," said Grim.

"It is a good attitude to have," said the Amethyst dragon.

Grim smirked. "And here I took you for a cynic, FÃ-rinne."

"I look at the world and see the harsh truths. I am the dragon of the Amethyst, the Gem of Truth."

The Diamond dragon bounded over to them. "Will you play with me?" she asked Grim.

Grim put a smile on and looked over at Deathshriek. "Well, I think it is safe to say that you have worn him out."

"**Hey!**"

Grim chuckled and shrugged off his weapons. "All right, let's see how you do against smaller opponents."

Deathshriek and Grim traded places.

"Will he be all right?" the Amethyst dragon asked Deathshriek.

"**He's wrestled with much larger dragons in the past,**" Deathshriek replied. "**The only time we really had to worry was when a Thunder Drum stepped on him. He was sore for a few days, but he was fine.**"

The Amethyst dragon smiled as he watched the Diamond dragon played. "He is so happy."

Deathshriek nodded.

"His name is misleading."

Deathshriek gave a warbling laugh. "**If you would have met him when I did, you would think differently. When I found him, he was nearly frozen to death on a boat he was sent out to die in. I wasn't sure if he was going to live. The least I can do was keep him comfortable. I took him back to my den, lit a fire, and waited. When he wasn't dead the next day and had gotten sick, I knew I would have to keep him alive. I fed him like a dragoness would her young. It took me a few tries to realize that I had to void what I had in my stomach before eating and regurgitating the fish for Grim. Too much stomach juice was worse than not eating at all.**"

"You saved his life."

"**I think all the dragons on Grim Island had a hand in it,**" said Deathshriek. "**I got his strength back, but some of the others gave him a reason to live. We taught him to hunt. We taught him to fly. We taught him to speak.**"

"You earned his trust and he earned yours."

"Dragon training begins and ends with trust."

The two dragons turned to see Hiccup standing behind them.

"**Hiccup? Where's -?*"

The Diamond dragon and Grim yelped as a shadow pounced on them.

"Toothless!" yelled Grim. But he couldn't stay mad and started laughing. He looked over at Hiccup. "Never say you cannot sneak up on a Baleful Banshee."

Hiccup was grinning. "I wasn't sure what Toothless was doing."

Toothless laughed.

Grim straightened his clothes out, wiping some dirt from his pants. "What are you doing here? I thought we were waiting until dark to begin."

"Grindheart was ready to go," said Hiccup. "Ember-Ash is going to take Barda and Jasmine. I figured out a way for Axewing to have a saddle so Lief can ride him. I figured I should find you awhile. Anything?"

Grim shook his head.

Hiccup looked at the dragons. "Might be a safe bet that Bres and those fakes aren't here."

"Two territories down," Grim muttered.

"Grindheart's still going to make a pass through here to be sure," Hiccup told him. "We don't want to risk missing them."

"Are we going to wait for them here?" Grim asked.

Hiccup gave a shrug. "I thought about doing that." He turned to the Amethyst dragon. "Would you like to come with us?"

"If it means ensuring the safety of the territory, I will," said the Amethyst dragon.

The sun dipped below the horizon.

Grim looked to the west. "Grindheart will be out now. It should not be long."

"What is that?" the Diamond dragon asked. She was looking to the northeast.

They turned. There was a bright red light shining into the sky.

"Do you think that it could be Bres?" Hiccup asked.

"Only one way to find out," answered Grim.

The riders got on their dragons and took off, the Amethyst and the Diamond dragons behind them.

"It is coming from the Opal territory," said the Amethyst dragon.

Grim hissed loudly, sounding like he was cursing.

"Okay, we need a plan," said Hiccup. "We're going to have to get the others. We're not going to be able to do this alone. Grim, can you and Deathshriek go ahead and see what's going on?"

Grim gave a nod. "Stay safe." He urged Deathshriek forward with a nudge of his leg.

Hiccup looked over at the Amethyst dragon. "Toothless and I will try to find the others."

"We will come with you to the border," said the Amethyst dragon.

A hissing roar sounded behind them. They turned and saw Grindheart in the lead of the group. At his wing was Axewing, Lief on his back. Ember-Ash and Blackscar brought up the rear.

"Hiccup!" That was Barda. "What is happening?"

Hiccup motioned to the light. "Your guess is as good as mine."

"Where is Grim?" Lief asked.

"Getting a closer look." Hiccup turned to the bright light. "I hope he's okay."

* * *

><p>Deathshriek flew to the source of the bright red light; the town square. Grim could see an altar set up and a tall cloaked figure standing at it. The light was coming from the altar.<p>

"**I think we found Bres,**" said Grim.

Deathshriek grunted.

"I call upon Despair," said the cloaked figure.

Grim shuddered. It was the chanting in his dream.

From the altar a wisp of black smoke rose into the sky. It began to take shape, forming wings and a head.

"Destroy Hope," commanded the cloaked figure.

The smoke continued to form itself into a dragon. Its head bobbed and it flew north.

Deathshriek could feel Grim tensing on his back. He was hissing and growling. Deathshriek thought he was going to jump off his back and go after the cloaked figure.

"**It's going after the Opal dragon,**" said Deathshriek.

"**We need to stop it,**" said Grim.

"I call upon Sorrow and Doubt."

Two more wisps of smoke rose. Instead of flying off, they formed into the gold and scarlet fakes they knew.

"Destroy the dragons here, but leave the king," the cloaked figure ordered. "I want him to watch."

The fakes roared in understanding.

"**We have to go,**" said Grim.

"**Don't need to tell me twice.**"

Deathshriek turned tail and started flying back to the others. A fireball hit him broadside and knocked them out of the air.

"**Grim!**" he yelled.

Grim put his arms out to Deathshriek. Deathshriek pulled Grim close and prepared for impact.

* * *

><p>"Grim!" Hiccup yelled. He saw the scarlet fake had fired a shot off at nothing, but then he saw the falling Baleful Banshee. They both fell into the water.<p>

"Can they swim?" Jasmine called out.

Hiccup replied immediately. "Not if they have broken bones."

* * *

><p>Deathshriek pushed Grim to the surface. The boy let out a cry and coughed.<p>

"**Are you okay?**"

Grim put his arm around Deathshriek's neck. "I don't know. My arm hurts."

Deathshriek fought the strong current to the bank and pulled Grim out by the collar. He watched Grim lay down on the bank and pull off his jacket. His shirt still covered his arm.

"**Is it broken?**"

Grim shook his head. "No," he coughed. "Only bruised."

"**Can you hold your sword?**"

Grim drew his sword from his back. He gave it an experimental swing. After one more good cough, he said, "**It will have to do.**"

Blue fire erupted mere feet away from them. Deathshriek put his wings around Grim to keep from being burned. They both disappeared, hoping their invisibility would get them out of it. Deathshriek looked up and saw what appeared to be the Lapis Lazuli dragon.

"**That must be Misfortune,**" said Grim.

"**And Sorrow and Doubt?**" Deathshriek questioned, trying to protect Grim from the heat. While the scales protected him from the fire, Grim could still roast in those clothes.

"**Let's get out of this first,**" said Grim.

Deathshriek looked up and saw the blue fake make another pass for them, searching for where they could be hiding.

* * *

><p>Hiccup's first thought after he saw Grim and Deathshriek fall into the river was to go after them. However they were stopped by the gold and scarlet fake dragons. The gold one's face was still ripped apart and stained with gray.<p>

"Scatter!" Hiccup yelled, seeing the two fakes coming at them. The next chance he got, he looked over and saw blue fire lighting up the riverbank and it didn't belong to Deathshriek.

"Oh, no," breathed Hiccup. "Toothless, get over there. We have to help."

Toothless grunted in agreement and made the turn. Just as he did, Hiccup narrowly missed being speared by the scarlet fake's talons.

Lief was not used to being somewhat in control of a non-Deltoran dragon. Axewing had a very large wingspan and put it to good use, but being so large also made him a target. He looked behind him to see where Barda and Jasmine were, but could not see them. Axewing chose that moment to make a bank turn and nearly threw Lief from the saddle.

Axewing huffed a small apology at Lief. He knew he turned hard and could feel Lief tugging on his horns. The gold fake was right behind him. With his sharp wing, he cut into its shoulder. The false dragon roared in pain and flew away.

Lief caught a glimpse of the orange and gray Nightmare dragon with Barda and Jasmine. The black one was close, almost guarding them.

* * *

><p>Deathshriek was looking for a way for him and Grim to escape. The blue fake, Misfortune, continued to breathe fire.<p>

"Plasma blast!"

There was a pause in Misfortune's attacks. Deathshriek grabbed Grim and took off. The two became visible for Deathshriek to flip Grim onto his back.

"You okay?" Hiccup called over.

Grim wiped some sweat from his face, smearing ash across it. "I'm fine."

Misfortune came back for them.

"**Scream!**" Grim ordered.

Deathshriek launched a sonic shriek attack at Misfortune. The wail sent the blue fake fleeing.

Grim turned to Hiccup. "Bres is in the town square. He's controlling the fakes."

Hiccup scanned the area to check for the false dragons. He was beginning to see a pattern in how the fakes fought. They would chase and attack and fall back whenever the dragons would turn on them.

Hiccup noticed the gold fake had a new gash on its shoulder. However, it didn't look fresh. Hiccup frowned. "I thought it didn't have that a few minutes ago."

"What?" asked Grim.

"That gold fake didn't have that gash the last time I saw it. Unless you did that when we first fought it."

Grim looked at the gold fake. "I did not do that."

Hiccup winced. "You don't think they can heal themselves, do you?"

The thought hadn't occurred to Grim, but with the luck they had been having, it did not surprise him that it could be true.

They noticed the scarlet fake, Sorrow, was coming after them.

"Hiccup, I need you to listen to me," said Grim. "Bres is in the town square. He is controlling the fakes from there. He already sent the fake rainbow dragon after DÃ³chas. You need to get to Lief and tell him this. Deathshriek and I can distract Sorrow."

"I'm not leaving you behind to fight alone," argued Hiccup.

"Toothless is the fastest dragon there is! Get to Lief. Deathshriek and I can hold it off long enough for you to do it."

Hiccup hesitated.

"Go!"

Toothless flew off.

Grim turned to the scarlet fake. "***Deathshriek, do you remember what the Shooting Star dragons taught us?***"

"**I don't think these things want a dance lesson,**" hissed Deathshriek. He pulled his lips back in a twisted smile. "***But we can teach these things a thing or two about messing with real dragons.**"

Deathshriek took off and flamed Sorrow's underside before flipping around and flying off.

* * *

><p>Hiccup and Toothless caught up with Lief and Axewing.<p>

"Bres is here? You are certain?" Lief asked when Hiccup finished telling him what Grim found.

"I believe Grim," said Hiccup. "And who else could control the fakes?"

Lief looked down at the city. "This must end." He turned Axewing in the direction of the town square.

Hiccup and Toothless followed.

At the town square, the cloaked figure looked up at them. "Ah, greetings, King of Deltora. I am Bres." Bres was a tall man, not nearly as broad as Barda, but still strong. His dark eyes were manic and a smirk played on his lips. Dark hair framed his face and he had a scar from his left cheek to the right of his chin, cutting through his mouth. His clothes were rough, tanned skins of different animals.

"Stop this now," commanded Lief.

Bres chuckled. "I do not take orders from you, little king. I give the orders."

"You do no longer," said Lief, sitting tall in the saddle.

"You are in no position to give orders!" roared Bres.
"Deceit!"

Another wisp of black smoke rose from the altar. This one took the shape of the Amethyst dragon.

Toothless easily got out of the way when the violet fake attacked, but Axewing was not as lucky. With his large wings, it was not simple for him to make tight turns when he wasn't prepared for them. Lief fell off and landed on one of the roofs of the buildings below.

"Lief!" Hiccup yelled.

Bres began to shout in a language Lief could not understand.

Hiccup, however, with the medallion the Scottish witch gave him, could understand it.

"_Seven hearts of the land were harvested. Seven shadows were left in the ground. Seven fires soar the vast sky and hundreds more are silent in sound. Seven more shall join as ash, their anguished cries echoing in the night. The king will fall to his knees and beg for mercy and for life._"

Hiccup saw Lief get to his knees. He wondered how hurt the king was from the fall. He had seen Astrid take a worse fall with only bruises, but she hadn't hit the ground, just several trees.

"_The crown will be wagered in challenge and the victor shall onward rule. But only royal blood may pass through the gate and participate in the duel._"

Symbols glowing red appeared around Hira. They became brighter and everyone was forced from the city.

"Lief!" shrieked Jasmine.

The symbols created a dome over the city.

Ember-Ash flew to the dome, but was unable to pass through. He fired off a blast of flame, but it did nothing.

The fake dragons moved to one side of the city. They watched the Berkian dragons.

Hiccup kept his eye on them and did a quick count. "Deceit, Misfortune, Sorrow, Doubt."

A roar came from the north. They wondered if it was the Opal dragon.

"Oh, no," whispered Grim. "Despair."

They knew it wasn't the Opal dragon, but the fake dragon.

"There are two more." Jasmine pointed behind Doubt and Sorrow. Hiding behind them were the green and silver fakes.

"What's the opposite of honor and purity?" Hiccup asked.

"Immorality and Impurity," Barda answered.

Jasmine frowned. "Why are they waiting? They have better odds. Why not attack in numbers?"

"Don't push our luck, Jasmine," said Hiccup.

Axewing and Blackscar growled in agreement. They were all tired.

Fearcloak moved over to Grim. "***What are we going to do, Grim?***"

Grim only put his hand on Fearcloak's head. He didn't have an answer for the small dragon.

"What was that chanting?" Barda asked. "Did anyone understand it?"

Hiccup, who had been the closest, answered. "Seven hearts of the land were harvested. Seven shadows were left in the ground. Seven fires soar the vast sky and hundreds more are silent in sound. Seven more shall join as ash, their anguished cries echoing in the night. The king will fall to his knees and beg for mercy and for life."

Grim moaned in anguish.

Hiccup paused for a moment before continuing. "The crown will be wagered in challenge and the victor shall onward rule. But only royal blood may pass through the gate and participate in the duel."

Barda looked down at the dome. "So Lief must duel Bres for the crown." He sighed. "And the Belt."

"The Belt will not work for Bres," Jasmine snapped. "It will only shine for Adin's heir. Bres is not Adin's heir."

"I doubt Bres intends to use the Belt, Jasmine," said Barda. "He means to destroy the dragons."

Jasmine pressed her lips into a thin line.

Barda sighed and stared at the dome. "And to destroy the dragons means to destroy Deltora."

A hiss brought their attention away from the dome. Grindheart was hovering beside Axewing, his spines standing straight up.

Blackscar growled. "***We have other things to worry about.***"

Still on the opposite side of the dome were the false dragons. They were staring at the Berkian dragons.

"Why are they waiting?" Jasmine asked again.

"For a victor," Grim answered.

"A victor?" asked Hiccup.

Jasmine understood immediately. "You see the same with packs. The leaders fight while the others watch. Once there is a victor, the fight for survival begins. Why did I not see that sooner?"

"How are we to know how the false dragons think?" asked Barda.

"So we just wait?" asked Hiccup.

"We cannot do much else," said Jasmine. "If we move, they will see it as cowardice and come after us."

"If we move, we get attacked. If we don't move, we wait for Lief and Bres to stop fighting and then we're attacked." Hiccup gave an

aggravated groan. "I guess it's better to wait for now. We need a plan. No matter who wins down there, we'll have to fight the fakes."

"The odds are terrible," Barda pointed out. "Seven false dragons against six true dragons."

Fearcloak squawked.

Jasmine turned to the sound. "I am sorry, little one. You are much too small to fight."

From under her jacket, Kree and Filli somberly agreed.

Hiccup jolted in the saddle. "That's it!" he whispered. "I got an idea."

* * *

><p>Lief considered himself very lucky that he wasn't more hurt than what he was. Nothing felt broken, but he was shaky on his legs.<p>

With the dome overhead, he couldn't see his friends or the false dragons. Below him in the town square, Bres was watching him with a smirk.

"Are you going to stay up there all night, king?" Bres called. "Why not come down here to fight? Are you scared, little king?" He laughed.

Lief found his way down from the building, climbing through a top window. He let his fingers brush against the Gems, gathering courage, clarity of mind, fortune, and paused. He usually did not touch the Opal. The Gem of Hope granted visions of the future to come. Lief did not like touching it, often seeing horrible things warning him of evil. The last time he touched the Opal, it showed him what Deltora would have become if they had not stopped the Shadowlord.

After a moment of hesitation, Lief decided he needed to have the hope. He touched the Opal. Instead of the vision he had expected, he heard a voice instead.

"_I am royal blood. I was banished from my home, but I am still royal blood. My ancestors were great kings. My father, Ard RÃ- Na Ã%irran â€" High King of Ireland. I am a prince. My name -."_

"Have you fled, little king?" Bres called.

Lief moved his fingers over Ruby and Amethyst. He drew his sword and went down to meet Bres.

Bres grinned as Lief stepped out of the building. "I was beginning to think you lost your nerve, little king."

"I will not run," said Lief. "I will defeat you. You will not kill the last dragons."

"You are a little late for that," sneered Bres. "The last of the Opal dragons has fallen."

Lief paled. His hand went to the Opal. "_I am royal blood,_" he heard the voice declare again. The voice sounded familiar, but that didn't matter at the moment. Lief couldn't sense the Opal dragon.

"Hope has died," said Bres.

Lief gripped his sword in both hands. "Hope still lives."

Bres picked up a sword from the altar. "Not for long."

"Why are you doing this?" Lief asked. "Why are fixated on destroying the dragons?"

"The dragons cannot be controlled," said Bres. "These shadows can be. They have no concern for borders and working together with each other. And they can be controlled."

"Why would you need to control them?" asked Lief.

"Someone has to do some good for this kingdom," sneered Bres. "With the Shadowlord gone, what have you done since then? You should be gathering armies to stand against the Shadowlord's return. You should be making allies with other lands for strength. You should be using anything as a defense to keep Deltora from falling into shadow again. But you sit there on that little throne of yours and let a few trade ships bring you goods out of pity."

"They do not bring goods out of pity," Lief argued. "Once, Deltora was a great place of trade. I will see it be again. I will see this land restored to the glory of the time of Adin."

"And like the first time, the Shadowlord will come again," snapped Bres. "Deltora needs a strong king, one willing to fight for his land. With my magic and the shadow dragons, I will lead an army able to defeat the Shadowlord in its own land."

"You would lead the people to death," Lief said.

"Death is part of the natural order," said Bres. "There will be death, but there will be freedom from fear."

"But it is the dragons that protect the land."

"And my dragons will protect the land!"

"Destroy them and the power of the Belt will lessen. And besides, you will not be able to wear the Belt. Only an heir of Adin can wear it."

Bres scoffed. "The Belt? It is a pretty trinket. My power can protect Deltora."

Lief shook his head. "You are mad."

"I am a realist," said Bres. "You know this is going to happen, even with that Belt of yours."

"I will stop you," said Lief.

Bres laughed. "You? If you had the dragons or your friends, you could. But alone? Alone you are weak."

With that, Bres lifted his sword and charged Lief. Lief was able to block the blow, but almost went down on his knees. He pushed the sword back only to have to duck to avoid being beheaded. Lief rolled and got to his feet to block again.

The muffled sound of multiple dragon roars reached their ears. They both looked up at the dome.

"Sounds like your friends decided to do something incredibly foolish," said Bres. "My dragons will enjoy tearing them apart."

"No!" Lief sprang forward and they started again. Lief hoped if he defeated Bres that it would undo his sorcery.

* * *

><p>Outside of the dome, the dragons were dodging the fakes and their attacks. Barda and Ember-Ash were chasing the silver fake. It was a cowardly thing that liked to attack and run off. They all liked doing that, but it was the silver fake that seemed to be guilty of it the most. Ember-Ash was having enough of it turning tail and fleeing.<p>

Axewing was chasing the green fake with a new rider: Jasmine. While she was used to using her small size to her advantage, Jasmine could see the benefits of being one of the larger dragons. Axewing's wingspan was almost the same as some of the larger fakes. Especially since those wings were razor sharp. He could dive out of the sky and cut his enemies.

"Get above him," Jasmine ordered Axewing.

Axewing did as he was told, gaining altitude.

The green fake looked behind it and saw nothing. Axewing gave a roar and swooped down, cutting it. To a normal dragon, the damage would have been serious, but the wound was already healing quickly.

The remaining dragons were leading the rest of the fakes in an aerial dance of death. Toothless and Deathshriek, the quickest and most agile, randomly shot at the fake dragons while Blackscar used the dark to his advantage, swooping down and lighting himself on fire. As for Grindheart, the Whispering Death would get in as close as he could to an unsuspecting fake and snap it with his tail. He did manage to take a bite out Sorrow, but it did little to the fake red dragon.

"Lief better hurry up," Hiccup shouted over to Grim.

Grim fired an arrow at Doubt, blinding it in the left eye. He felt little satisfaction at the fact that it couldn't heal with the arrow lodged in its socket.

Hiccup put his shield up to keep from getting scorched. He then had Toothless lead Misfortune to Grindheart's position. Several of his spines shredded the side of the fake.

Blackscar got his talons around Despair and tried crushing its throat. He was broadsided by Deceit.

Barda was nearly tossed off Ember-Ash when Doubt recovered from its bout of pain and fired at them.

In the dome, Lief was not faring as well as he had hoped against Bres. Bres was relentless in his attacks. Lief was thankful for his speed or he would have been dead already. As it was, he had a few cuts and skinned knee where he had to slide to avoid a blow.

"You are alone," said Bres. "You are not fit to be king."

Lief couldn't move fast enough out of the path of Bres' sword. It caught him in the side. The wound wasn't deep, but it hurt.

Bres grinned. "I told you."

Lief looked at Bres. He knew he needed help.

Outside of the dome, Deathshriek and Grim flew over.

"**This is taking a long time,**" said Grim.

"**It seems like a long time in battle,**" said Deathshriek.

"**Yes, but this is taking too long,**" said Grim. "**We're getting tired. We need to end this.**"

Deathshriek agreed wholeheartedly with Grim.

Toothless flew by.

"Hiccup!" Grim shouted.

Hiccup turned around.

Deathshriek used a sonic shriek to turn the red fake away from them. He then flew next to Toothless.

"That chant," said Grim. "Did it say royal blood or Deltoran royal blood?"

"Only royal blood," answered Hiccup. "Why?"

Grim looked down at the dome. "This has to end."

Hiccup nodded at Grim's obviousness.

Grim shouldered his bow. "Someone needs to show Bres what a real dragon trainer can do." Grim pulled his feet up so he was crouching on Deathshriek's back.

Hiccup smiled.

Deathshriek hovered over the dome where they thought the town square would be.

"What is he doing?" yelled Barda.

Grim stood up fully.

"I am royal blood. I was banished from my home, but I am still royal blood. My ancestors were great kings. My father, Ard RÃ- Na Ã%irran â€" High King of Ireland." Grim looked down at the dome and steeled himself. "I am a prince!"

Jasmine screamed when she saw Grim jump from his dragon's back still shouting.

"My name -."

* * *

><p>Cliffhanger. I know, this is so horrible of me. Some of you have been waiting from the beginning to learn what Grim's name was. You're just going to have to wait a little longer. But it was just so easy!

On a different note, Halloween is coming up and that means Trick or Treat. I may be too old for that, but that's not going to stop me from dressing up this year. I'm planning on going around the neighborhood on Trick or Treat night dressed as the Mad Hatter (I talked my friend into going as Alice). Anyone care to share what they plan on doing for Halloween?

9. Chapter 9

Yeah, I know some of you hate me for that cliffhanger. I'm not sorry for it at all. So here is the battle everyone's been looking forward to. And a secret that's been long overdue in its reveal.

* * *

><p>Several things went through Hiccup's mind as he watched his brother. Most of them were about how crazy he was to be doing this. If it didn't work, it would kill him. And even if it did work, it could still kill him if Grim didn't land on something soft or fell too far. The other was how happy he was to finally learn his brother's real name. Hiccup had known for a long time that Grim was an Irish prince, but he never told him his name for fear of someone else learning it and coming after him. After all, Grim was supposed to have died on that boat he was put on.<p>

Hiccup heard Jasmine scream when they saw Grim jump off of Deathshriek's back.

"My name," Grim yelled as he fell, "is Nuada mac Domnall ua NÃ©ill!"

Grim disappeared through the dome.

The red light filled his vision for a second before he realized the ground was closer than he thought. Grim hit the roof of a building and began rolling. Grim extended his claws and dug them into the roof to stop from rolling. His bruised arm throbbed and he felt his legs swing into the open air. He looked over his shoulder and saw his lower legs off the edge of the roof. He managed to land on a tall

building. If Grim hadn't stopped, he would have fallen to the pavement.

Grim pulled himself up and began looking for Lief. He could hear the sounds of a fight going on, along with someone taunting him.

Climbing down from the roof was easy enough for Grim. Once at street level, he ran to the sound of the fight.

* * *

><p>Lief cried out when Bres stopped his sword swing and kicked him in the leg. Lief went down on one knee.<p>

"Die." Bres raised his sword above his head to execute Lief. He swung.

Bres' blade was stopped by another, larger sword.

Grim stared Bres down, holding his sword from taking off Lief's head.

Bres was shocked. "How did you get here? Only a king can pass through the barrier."

"Wrong." Grim pushed Bres away and held his sword up, moving in front of Lief. "Only royal blood. You neither specified king nor Deltoran blood."

"In that case, I will just kill you both," snapped Bres.

"Lief, can you fight?" Grim asked.

Lief got to his feet, his injured leg aching. "Yes."

Bres yelled and charged.

Lief and Grim began pushing Bres back, sending him on the defensive. As they backed him up, they got closer and closer to the altar.

Bres didn't like the fact that he was losing. His attacks became sloppy and angry. Grim couldn't help but think of an angry dragon lashing out. Bres was blind to everything but Lief and Grim.

Bres swung at Lief's head. Lief blocked the swing and so did Grim. They pushed him back and Bres lost his balance. He fell onto the altar. The altar flared and Bres screamed.

* * *

><p>Outside, the dragons, riders, and false dragons looked down to see the dome disappear.<p>

"It is over," said Barda.

"But who is the victor?" Jasmine asked.

The false dragons reacted violently.

"Something tells me it was Lief and Grim!" Hiccup shouted.

* * *

><p>On the ground, Lief opened his eyes. He could hear chirping. It was the same chirping he heard in the Gnome rest. He turned his head and saw a birdlike creature standing over Grim. It stood on two legs, had a triangular shaped head, and was covered in brilliant green scales. It ruffled the spines on its tail before having them lay flat again.<p>

Grim groaned and opened his eyes. His eyes widened in shock. "Is this a dream? Smaragaid?"

Lief put his hand on the Topaz and looked up at the sky. It was a full moon and the Topaz was at its height of power. "The doors to the spirit world are open this night."

Grim turned to Lief before looking back to the dragon. "***I am sorry. This was my fault.**"

Smaragaid nudged Grim. "***I never blamed you. I never thought to blame you.**"

"**If I had never met you, none of this would have happened. You would still be alive.**"

Smaragaid clucked. "***But then you never would have met Deathshriek. You never would have found a real family. You now have a full life, Nuada. Live it fully.**"

Grim's breath hitched as he tried to keep his tears from flowing. He nodded.

"**Good,**" said Smaragaid. "***Now, I believe you have a battle to win, little prince.**"

"**Will you be with me through it?*" Grim asked.

"**Oh, Nuada,**" cooed Smaragaid. "***I never left you. You know what must be done.**"

Smaragaid disappeared.

Grim blinked away his tears. "Lief." His voice was strong. "Summon the dragons."

Lief blinked. "But Bres is gone. The false dragons cannot win without Bres."

Grim pointed at the sky. "Do you see those fakes relenting? Our dragons aren't going to be able to take them down alone."

Lief shook his head. "One of them is already dead."

"Do you know for certain?" asked Grim. "Because I sent Fearcloak looking for the Opal dragon."

"Bres said he was dead. Fearcloak would be finding a body."

"And you believe him?"

Lief looked at Grim's eyes. The younger boy was ready for battle, whether Lief wanted to fight or not.

"If you lose the dragons, Deltora could fall," said Grim.

Lief put his hands on the Belt and called out to all the dragons.

Grim nodded. He took a few steps back and screamed.
"***Deathshriek!***"

Deathshriek hurried to get to his rider. He stopped on the ground long enough for Grim and Lief to get one before taking to the sky again.

"I called to them," said Lief, holding on to Grim for dear life. "But I do not know if they will come."

"Have faith," said Grim. "Have hope."

Deathshriek let out a distress call for all to hear. It was meant to be a bit of a rallying cry for any dragon willing to help. No one was expecting an answer. But it came.

Lief was startled by the roar and turned around. Almost dyed crimson by his own blood, came the Opal dragon.

The sight gave Hiccup hope. "Come on!" he yelled to Toothless, pulling hard on the saddle.

Toothless turned to help the Opal dragon.

It was not long before the other dragons came.

"Why are they all here?" asked Barda.

Jasmine smiled. "They sensed the danger. Lief called to them and they came."

Toothless flew next to the Opal dragon.

"We were worried," Hiccup told him.

"I was delayed," said the Opal dragon. "This little dragon was kind enough to keep me living."

From behind several bloody spines, Fearcloak put his head up and barked proudly.

"Good work, Fearcloak," said Hiccup.

Deathshriek caught up to them.

"Grim, Lief, ideas?" Hiccup called out.

"Each Deltoran dragon fights their counterpart," said Lief.

"Grindheart! Ember-Ash! Stay with the Diamond dragon!" Grim shouted. "She will need help." He turned to the Opal dragon. "Deathshriek and I will stay with DÃ³chas."

"Are you able to fight?" Lief asked the Opal dragon.

"You ask much of me, king," said the Opal dragon. "But this is my territory and I must defend it."

"We'll be right with you," Hiccup assured.

Toothless grunted in agreement.

"Let's go!" Hiccup yelled.

Now the odds were thirteen against seven. Fearcloak flew over to Lief and wrapped himself around his shoulders like he did with Grim so many times.

The Deltoran dragons went after the false dragons. Faith to Doubt. Joy to Sorrow. Hope to Despair. Fortune to Misfortune. Honor to Immorality. Truth to Deceit. Purity to Impurity. Grindheart and Ember-Ash went with the Diamond dragon. She was young and possibly needed some help. Toothless and Deathshriek stayed with the Opal dragon.

Now that they had the numbers and some fresh flyers, along with the false dragons not being able to draw on Bres' power anymore, the battle became a slaughter. The first was Impurity. It had no chance against three dragons, especially one that had been in multiple fights against a Night Fury. The Diamond dragon flamed the false dragon. Grindheart got his teeth into its side. That was the end of the false Diamond dragon.

The second was Immorality. The Emerald dragon was a force of nature when she was angered and this false dragon had done just that. After a brief fight and a few wounds made by some underhanded tactics from the green fake, the Emerald dragon got her jaws around its neck and jerked. Two down.

The Topaz dragon had little trouble taking out Doubt. Half-blind, the gold fake couldn't see exactly where the Topaz dragon was. A well-placed fireball and a slash and Doubt was done.

The Amethyst dragon tumbled in the air with Deceit. The dragon was tricky. It would move one way and then the other and attack when the Amethyst dragon least expected it. It found openings in the Amethyst dragon's defenses. The Amethyst dragon learned he had to attack when Deceit made its move, like catching someone in a lie. Deceit faked right, but the Amethyst dragon was ahead of it, already moving left before Deceit realized what was happening. The Amethyst dragon had his talons into Deceit's neck.

The Lapis Lazuli dragon was having help from Blackscar against Misfortune. Blackscar was quick for his age and size, though he was roughly the size of the smaller Deltoran dragons. Misfortune darted across the sky with the Lapis Lazuli dragon on its tail. Blackscar laid a trap and waited, using his coloring to his advantage. When Misfortune wasn't paying attention to him, Blackscar swooped down and grabbed Misfortune's tail, yanking it back. The Lapis Lazuli dragon

latched onto Misfortune's back. From there, the Lapis Lazuli dragon snapped Misfortune's neck.

Sorrow was being chased down by the Ruby dragon and Axewing. Jasmine had to do little except hold onto Axewing's horns to keep from falling off. Axewing herded Sorrow to the Ruby dragon and the Ruby dragon finished it quickly with a couple fireballs and crushing its neck in her jaws.

Despair was focusing on the Opal dragon. The wounded dragon was having a hard enough time just staying in the air. On his right was Deathshriek with Grim and Lief and on his left was Toothless with Hiccup. The two smaller dragons kept Despair back, but Despair could still fire at them.

"Stay close, king," said the Opal dragon. "I need your strength."

Lief put his hand on the Opal. "I am here."

Grim drew his sword, holding it in his good hand.

Hiccup adjusted his shield.

Despair fired.

"**Scream!**" ordered Grim.

Deathshiek used his shriek. The power in it was enough to stop the fire. If it had been a Thunder Drum's roar, Despair would have been toasted by its own attack.

"Plasma blast!"

Toothless' attack hit the rainbow fake in the side of the head, cutting off the jet of flames.

Grim urged Deathshriek forward. Deathshriek caught a hold of Despair and sank his claws into its hide.

Hiccup had Toothless do something similar by biting its wing.

"Now!" the brothers and Lief yelled.

The rainbow dragon came from underneath and tore out the rainbow fake's throat.

The three dragons let go and watched the last false dragon fall to the ground.

"It is over," said the Opal dragon. He began his descent to the ground, away from the carnage.

The other dragons followed.

* * *

><p>Once on the ground, Barda and Jasmine ran to Lief, Jasmine giving him a hug without a second thought.<p>

Blackscar snarled to get their attention. "***The bodies will need to be burned.**"

Grim nodded. "***But for now, I think we deserve a rest.**"

Blackscar sniffed and went over to the carcasses. Grindheart was already making a pit and Ember-Ash was waiting to see what Blackscar would do. The two Nightmares and the Whispering Death wasted no time pushing the carcasses into the pit and incinerating them.

Hiccup and Grim got off their dragons' backs.

"So," started Hiccup, "Nuada, huh?"

Grim gave a half-shrug and a nod.

"I guess, in a way, history did repeat itself," Hiccup joked.

"I'm no king," Grim reminded him.

"But you're a prince. That's close enough for me."

The Topaz dragon moved over to them. "Indeed. But we can concern ourselves with coincidences later. You should clean yourself, dragon speaker."

Grim looked at his clothes. They needed a wash. He made his way over to the river with Deathshriek. The Opal dragon was already there, slipping into the water to wash out his wounds.

"Do you mind if we join you?" Grim asked.

The Opal dragon looked at them. "Not at all. Do not eat the wise fish."

Deathshriek climbed in, keeping close to the bank because of the strong current.

Grim removed his weapons and started stripping off his clothes. Fearcloak flew over and perched on his bare shoulders.

"**Oh, Fearcloak, mind the talons!**" scolded Grim. "***I thought you were going to play with Lief and the others.**"

"**But I want to play with you,**" said Fearcloak.

"**Later.**"

Fearcloak climbed off Grim's shoulders.

Grim carefully got into the water. He had to keep close to the bank to keep from getting washed away. Grim may have been a strong swimmer, but the current was strong even for him. Deathshriek was down the river to catch him if need be and the Opal dragon was even farther downstream.

"**Grim, your arm.**"

Grim turned his bruised arm to get a better look at it. It was black

and blue and red up and down.

Deathshriek continued to stare at it. "***How badly are you hurt?*"

"**I believe it looks worse than it is,**" said Grim. "***I can move it with only a little pain. I won't be going against Gobber or Astrid in the near future.**"

Grim washed himself off and got out of the water.

Lief, Barda, and Jasmine had made a small campfire. They had no food, but the Amethyst dragon and Topaz dragon were fishing, avoiding the wise fish.

The Ruby dragon was watching Lief and Jasmine. Jasmine was sitting close to Lief. "***Young love.**"

Blackscar glanced at her. "***Grim would be pleased to know he's not being teased.**"

"**I said before, there is nothing wrong with being in love,**" said the Ruby dragon.

Blackscar pulled his lips back in a smile. "***No, there isn't. They are happy.**"

The Lapis Lazuli came over to Hiccup. "We are fortunate to meet you and your brother."

Hiccup gave a half smile and shrugged. "Funny how some things work out."

Grim came to stand beside Hiccup.

The Deltoran dragons surrounded them.

"Thank you for helping us," said the Topaz dragon.

"This could have ended tragically if you had not come," added the Opal dragon.

"Without you, we would have perished," said Amethyst dragon. "With the help of the king, you brought us all together."

"You only needed to work together, just like the Gems in the Belt," said Grim. "Alone, they are powerful. Together, they are unstoppable."

"I know dragons are territorial," Hiccup chimed in. "We're not saying to cross the borders whenever you feel like it, but help your neighbor when they need it."

Lief joined them. "Even the different tribes need help at times."

The Emerald dragon said stiffly, "We will uphold our oath to Dragonfriend. But I understand that there are times when exceptions need to be made." She looked at the Amethyst and Diamond dragons.

"A gift is in order," the Lapis Lazuli dragon said. She turned to Lief. "With your permission, of course, king."

"Yes, a gift to honor Deltora's heroes," Lief agreed.

Hiccup smiled shyly and dipped his head.

The Amethyst dragon put the curve of his talon under Hiccup's chin. "It is a great honor to be blessed by a dragon."

"I know," said Hiccup. "I was blessed with Toothless."

Grim chuckled. "I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Deathshriek."

Hiccup turned to Grim. "You were blessed with good luck. It must be an Irish thing."

Grim snorted. "Hardly! I heard the stories of how you lost your leg."

The Amethyst dragon turned to Lief. "You may witness because you are king. Your friends may as well."

Lief, Barda, Jasmine, and the Berkian and Scottish dragons stood back. The Deltoran dragons made a circle around Hiccup and Grim.

"Where would we like to start?" asked the Lapis Lazuli dragon. "Traditionally we begin from the eldest."

"Perhaps we should go by the order Adin collected the Gems," suggested the Ruby dragon.

"No," said the Emerald dragon. "We should honor Dragonfriend. The order he asked us to sleep until the king came."

The dragons looked at each other. They all agreed.

The Amethyst dragon spoke again. "True names are needed. From all of us."

The dragons agreed again. They looked at Hiccup and Grim.

"Full name?" Hiccup asked.

"It is preferred," said the Opal dragon. "We are aware some humans have long names telling their bloodlines and origins."

Hiccup glanced over at the Amethyst dragon. "You already know mine or at least part of it. It's Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III."

They gave him an odd look.

"I know, I know," said Hiccup, putting up his hands. "Weird name. The superstition back home is if you name your kid something disgusting that it'll keep the trolls away."

"And some of you already heard mine," said Grim. "Nuada mac Domnall ua Níall."

"I thought the 'Mac' part was Scottish," said Hiccup. "Like MacGuffin and Macintosh."

"The Irish do as well," said Grim. "For us, it identifies the father. My name translates to Nuada, son of Domnall, descendant, or in this case, grandson, of N  ill."

"So that would make N  ill your great-grandfather," Hiccup said, understanding.

The Amethyst dragon began. "Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, Nuada mac Domnall ua N  ill, we dragons of Deltora have deemed you worthy of receiving these great gifts. May you use them wisely."

The Topaz dragon moved in front of Hiccup and Grim. "I, Fidelis, the Dragon of the Topaz, give you the gift of insight. Keep your mind strong and clear and no pretense or evil magic shall trick you. The terrors of the night will flee from you. Have faith and those of the past will help you."

The Topaz dragon let out a heavy breath on Hiccup and Grim. A golden mist lingered on their skin.

The Topaz dragon moved back to the edge of the circle and the Ruby dragon took his place.

"I, Joyeu, the Dragon of the Ruby, give you the gift of joy. Let no misfortune catch you off-guard and no evil spirits haunt you. Snake venom will not harm you. Go and live your lives with happiness."

The Ruby dragon did the same as the Topaz dragon, this time a red mist lingering on their skin.

The Opal dragon stepped forward. "I, Hopian, the Dragon of the Opal, give you the gift of vision. Your sight will not falter. And though the future may seem bleak, keep hope and you will have the chance to change the future you foresee."

Rainbow colors mixed with the fading gold and red.

The Lapis Lazuli dragon was next. "I, Fortuna, the Dragon of the Lapis Lazuli, give you the gift of good fortune. May luck follow you wherever you may be and have good fortune in any situation."

Deep blue and silver covered the rainbow colors.

The Emerald dragon moved proudly with her head held high. "I, Honora, the Dragon of the Emerald, give you the gift of honor. Those who break their oaths with you will face misfortune. Evil will never hide from you. Sores and ulcers will heal quickly and poison will not harm you. Act with honor and you shall prevail."

The gold and red had long since disappeared and the rainbow coloring had faded. Now green was layered over dark blue and silver.

It was the Amethyst dragon's turn. "Hiccup, Nuada, I, Veritas, the Dragon of the Amethyst, give you the gift of tranquility. You will always find a way to a safe place. While my gift does not guard against poison or illness, you will be able to sense both. If in

danger, you will not panic."

The Amethyst dragon did not step back after he was finished, but urged the Diamond dragon forward.

"I do not know how to do it," said the Diamond dragon.

"I will help you with the words," said the Amethyst dragon. "The words do not need to be perfect, but the meaning needs to be clear." He muttered something else that they couldn't hear to her.

The Diamond dragon nodded and turned to Hiccup and Grim. She stumbled over her words a little, but the Amethyst dragon was there to help her. "I, Forta, the Dragon of the Diamond, give you the gift of strength and purity. You are protected against pestilence. You will always find courage and strength in the most fearful situations. And let my gift help cause true love."

It took her a moment to breathe a silvery mist on them.

"Very good," said the Amethyst dragon.

Hiccup and Grim thanked them.

* * *

><p>They managed to get a few hours of sleep on the barren plain by the river. Hiccup and Grim slept under Toothless and Deathshriek's wings. Lief and Jasmine sleeping against the Opal dragon. Barda had made a good friend in Ember-Ash and the Nightmare let him sleep up against his side.<p>

Fearcloak was up early with Filli and Kree. Though they didn't speak the same language, Kree got Fearcloak to follow him north. They found an orchard and found a little food for Filli and Kree, but not much else. Fearcloak went fishing in the river, finding some small, slow fish.

When they flew back to the camp, if one could call it that, some of the dragons were already awake. Fearcloak landed by Deathshriek and stuck his head under his wing.

"**Grim. Grim!**"

Grim groaned.

"**Grim, we found fruit trees. An orchard. It's north of here, not far as the dragon flies.**"

Grim crawled out from under Deathshriek's wing. "Lief?"

Lief was just waking up.

"Lief, Fearcloak says there's an orchard north of here."

Lief had to think for a moment. "Queen Bee's orchard. She is Steven and Nevets' mother. We have met her in the past. It was not on the best of terms."

"Do you think she will help us?" asked Grim. "We could use a little

breakfast. I don't think it would be a good idea to fish the river clean of the small fish. We should save some for the other creatures of the Plains."

"There are plenty of fish in the Broad River," assured the Opal dragon. He looked much better than last night. Lief had slept next to him so the Opal was close and he could heal. The dragon was still raw in places, but he no longer bled. He also had more vibrant coloring.

"She may help us," said Lief.

"No doubt she saw the battle from her house," Jasmine said, getting up.

The other dragons were rousting themselves. The Deltoran dragons wanted to get back to their territories. The Emerald dragon said good-bye and wished them well before leaving. She was the first to leave. The Amethyst and Diamond dragons were the next to leave after catching a few fish for themselves. The Ruby dragon left not long after them. She wished them well, watching Jasmine intently for a moment before flying east.

Jasmine let out a sigh of relief. "I should wear a wool cap to hide my hair. I always worry one of the dragons will want it."

"You have lovely hair," said the Topaz dragon. "Any dragon would like to have it wove into its nest."

Jasmine winced.

Hiccup frowned. "You use human hair in your nests?"

"Yes," said the Topaz dragon. "It keeps the nest warm. And it is beautiful. I prefer golden hair, but any long hair with a rich color is appealing." He turned to Grim. "Yours is a nice color as well."

Grim was not shy with his hair. "There is not much to line with."

The Lapis Lazuli dragon did not like to be ignored. She looked at Hiccup's hair. "And we do not often see a red color."

"Hey, hey! Leave me out of this," said Hiccup.

"Well," said the Lapis Lazuli dragon. "I am hungry. I think I will go back to my territory and catch myself some breakfast from the Shifting Sands."

The Lapis Lazuli said good-bye and flew west.

This left the Topaz and Opal dragons.

The Topaz dragon moved over to Hiccup. "You are an intelligent human, one who plans before acting."

Hiccup made an uneasy noise. "Most of the time. Other times I just do something stupid or crazy."

"You have faith in yourself and others," said the Topaz dragon. "That is why I am glad to call you a friend to Topaz dragons."

Hiccup rubbed the back of his neck shyly. "Thank you, Tru."

The others were smiling as well.

"Grim." It was the Opal dragon that spoke.

"Yes, Dã³chas?"

"You take the time to think. You plan well. You do not despair when things seem hopeless. You will be welcome in the Opal territory."

Grim gave a bow. "Thank you, Dã³chas."

The Topaz dragon left after a few minutes.

* * *

><p>When the dragons were fed, they flew north for a minute or two before seeing the orchard. They went to the front of the orchard near the house.<p>

Old Queen Bee almost had a heart attack when the Opal dragon landed in the road. The beekeeper supplied the humans breakfast as long as they told her what had happened last night. When their story was finished, she looked at Hiccup and Grim and gave them each a jar of her honey, telling them that it was special and they were to use it wisely. She also said if they happened to be around Deltora that they could stop by and purchase more at a fair price.

After breakfast, they went back to Del. The people were waiting for news from their king. They rejoiced to hear that Bres and the false dragons had been defeated. Hiccup, Grim, and their dragons became heroes of Deltora. Lief ordered a feast to be held in honor of Hiccup and Grim that night.

"When are you returning to Berk?" Jasmine asked.

"We'll have to leave very soon," said Hiccup. "Tomorrow morning would be best. We should have been home over a week ago."

At the feast, Lief noticed Grim slip out. Life followed him out of the hall and through the kitchen. It was an often enough used escape. He found Grim standing outside at the kitchen door.

"Are you not enjoying the feast?" Lief asked.

Grim looked over his shoulder. "Oh, yes."

Lief frowned. "Then what troubles you? Are you worried that you will not be able to get back to Berk?"

"No, that's not a problem. Blackscar and the others found us. They can lead us back. Once we get to Scotland, we can find our way back to Berk. We won't be able to stop in Dunbroch. I am worried about how we are going to explain this to our father."

Lief gave a smile. "Tell the truth."

Grim gave a small smile. "You do not know our father. He can be difficult."

Lief put his hand on the younger's shoulder. "All will be well."

Grim nodded.

"Now, let us go back to the feast," said Lief. "Hiccup will be looking for you if he sees you are gone."

* * *

><p>The morning came and Lief and the others saw Hiccup, Grim, and the dragons off. Axewing and Grindheart led the way.<p>

It took them two days to get back to Berk.

* * *

><p>Just the epilogue left now.

10. Chapter 10

Blackscar and Ember-Ash left them when they reached Scotland. They flew straight through the night over Scotland to the Barbaric Archipelago. The sun was rising as they made the last couple hours to Berk.

"So, have we figured out what we're going to say to Dad?" Hiccup asked.

"We'll tell him the truth," said Grim. "What else can we really tell him?"

Hiccup sighed. "I hope he's in the mood for listening."

"If he wants answers, he will be," said Grim.

They could see a boat.

Hiccup looked down to see who it belonged to. "Hey, that's one of ours! I think that's Mulch and Bucket."

It was Mulch and Bucket's fishing boat.

Bucket looked up. "Look! Look, Mulch! It's Hiccup and Grim!"

Hiccup and Grim waved to them and kept going.

Berk was soon in sight.

"Home, sweet home," said Hiccup.

Axewing and Grindheart flew around to the side of the island with the caves. Grindheart missed his caves and Axewing missed his favorite sunning spot near the caves where they could both be comfortable and

talk.

People had seen them coming. Toothless and Deathshriek landed in the town square and were flocked by the villagers. They were happy to have them home.

"Hiccup!"

Hiccup was almost tackled to the ground by Astrid.

"Astrid!"

After a brief hug, Astrid pulled away and punched Hiccup in the arm.

"Ow!" Hiccup grabbed his injured arm.

"Where have you been?" Astrid screamed. She hit him again. "Do you have any idea how worried I've been?" She hit him a third time. "I thought you were dead!"

Astrid's fourth hit was stopped by Grim's hand.

"I think he has had enough, Astrid," said Grim.

Astrid used her other hand to punch him in the stomach. "You're not much better!"

"Are you guys okay?" Fishlegs asked.

Ruffnut and Tuffnut looked them over for new scars. "Anyone hurt? Did you get into a fight?" They were too happy to hear about injuries. "Did we miss any violence?"

Snotlout crossed his arms and smirked. "Ha, probably nothing like I had to deal with."

Hiccup turned to Astrid. "What happened while we were gone?"

"Nothing," assured Astrid. "Snotlout's being Snotlout."

"Get out of the way! Move! Get out of my way!"

Hiccup didn't need to see who was yelling and pushing his way through the crowd. Before he could turn around properly, he was picked up and crushed in his father's strong arms.

"My boy."

"Hey, Dad," Hiccup strained.

Gobber wrapped an arm around Grim and gave him a hug. Fearcloak climbed around to avoid being squished. The Creeping Shadow got down and went to play with some Terrible Terrors.

Gobber stepped back and patted Grim's shoulder. "Good to see ye in one piece."

Grim nodded with a smile.

They were happy to be home.

Stoick put Hiccup down. He put both hands on his shoulders. "Where have you been? Astrid went to Scotland and they said you never arrived."

"Because we didn't," said Hiccup.

"Then where were you?" asked Astrid.

"It's a long story," said Hiccup. "And I don't know about Grim, but I would like some breakfast. We flew through the night."

"So be it." Stoick stood up. "Everyone, to the great hall!"

Almost the entire village went to the great hall. They knew there was a good story coming and no one wanted to miss it.

Stoick made everyone wait for Hiccup and Grim to eat. After they were finished and Gothi checked them for injuries, they stood in front of the village to tell their story.

"Before we start, there is something I wish to tell you," said Grim. "Many, if not all of you, know that I am not a Viking by blood. Even when it came out that I am of Celt blood, Irish to be exact, you still accepted me."

There were a few murmurs through the crowd. Yes, they all knew Grim was a Celt. They still loved him even though he wasn't a true Viking. He had helped them so much with his ability to speak to the dragons.

Grim looked at Astrid. "Astrid, you once asked me if my Irish heritage was the only thing I had to tell you. Do you remember that?"

"Sort of," Astrid replied.

"You joked about me being a prince."

Fishlegs put his hand up. "That I do remember."

Grim looked Astrid in the eye. "You were right."

Astrid blinked. "I'm sorry. What?"

"I was once an Irish prince."

Silence. Complete silence in the great hall.

Snotlout scoffed. "Oh, come on. You're joking. I know you've always been jealous of me, Grim, but one-upmanship is not your thing."

Gobber's mouth was hanging open. "I'm going to agree with Snotlout on this one. At least with the joking part."

Astrid glanced at Hiccup and saw he wasn't fazed in the least. "You knew about this?"

Hiccup found there was a bit of attention on him. He laughed nervously. "Yeah, I kinda knew for a while now."

Astrid turned back to Grim. "Why didn't you tell us?"

"For the same reason I didn't tell you I was Irish," said Grim.

"But we knew you were Irish," said Fishlegs. "Why not come out and tell us you were royalty?"

"Because I honestly felt that it wasn't that important," said Grim. "I am still Grim. But I want you to know the name I was born with."

"What is it?" asked Tuffnut. "Piper McKiltson?"

The twins laughed.

"Nuada mac Domnall ua Níall."

The twins stopped laughing.

"Okay, that's actually a cool name," said Tuffnut.

Stoick clapped his hand on Grim's shoulder. "Aye, and a good one. Wasn't Nuada the Irish god of war?"

Grim smiled. "Among other things."

Stoick patted Grim's shoulder. "Now, I believe you owe us a very good explanation."

Hiccup chose to begin the story. "It started on our way to Scotland. We got caught in a storm."

* * *

><p>And you know the rest from here, dear readers. The Dragon Trainer, Dragon Speaker series is going to be put on hold for a little while. I decided I wanted to make a Halloween fic since I haven't done a holiday story in a while. It's going to be a little different from what I usually do and I'm kind of hoping people will like it. Without giving too much away, it's going to be a few firsts for me. One, it's going to be horror. Now I've made attempts to do horror in the past (honestly I don't know how scary they are to other people, but I tried), but I'm hoping I'm going to nail it this time. Two, it's going to be a multi-chapter horror story. If I keep the pace I'm going right now, I should have the first part of it up next week.

End
file.